

SUPPLEMENTS TO  
VIGILIAE CHRISTIANAE



# The Christian Doctrine of *Apokatastasis*

A Critical Assessment  
from the New Testament  
to Eriugena



ILARIA L.E. RAMELLI

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BRILL

# The Christian Doctrine of *Apokatastasis*

Supplements  
to  
Vigiliae Christianae

Texts and Studies of  
Early Christian Life and Language

*Editors*

J. den Boeft – B.D. Ehrman – J. van Oort  
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VOLUME 120

*The titles published in this series are listed at [brill.com/vcs](http://brill.com/vcs)*

# The Christian Doctrine of *Apokatastasis*

A Critical Assessment from  
the New Testament to Eriugena

*By*

Ilaria L.E. Ramelli



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LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2013

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ramelli, Ilaria, 1973-

The Christian doctrine of Apokatastasis : a critical assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena / by Ilaria L.E. Ramelli.

pages cm. – (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, ISSN 0920-623X ; VOLUME 120)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-90-04-24509-9 (alk. paper) – ISBN 978-90-04-24570-9 (e-book) 1.

Restorationism—History of doctrines. 2. Apokatastasis (The Greek word) I. Title.

BT263.R36 2013

234—dc23

2012049287

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual “Brill” typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see [www.brill.com/brill-typeface](http://www.brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 0920-623X

ISBN 978-90-04-24509-9 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-24570-9 (e-book)

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*For Dad,  
à bientôt*

*Non ita aeternum istud mortis esse arbitror regnum ut est uitae atque iustitiae.  
[...] Si eadem aeternitas mortis ponatur esse quae uitae est,  
iam non erit mors uitae contraria, sed aequalis:  
aeternum enim aeterno contrarium non erit, sed idem.  
Nunc autem certum est mortem uitae esse contrarium:  
certum est ergo quod, si uita aeterna est, mors esse non possit aeterna.  
[...] Cum mors animae, quae est nouissimus inimicus, fuerit destructa,  
regnum mortis pariter cum morte destructum erit.*

(Origen, *Comm. in Rom.* 5,7)

Μηδενὸς τῶν παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγονότων τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀποπίπτοντος.  
“No creature of God will fall out of the Kingdom of God.”

(St. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* 14 Downing)



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This monograph is the result of almost fifteen years of scholarly research. It is impossible for me to just list all the scholars whom I would like to thank for having discussed this topic with me over these years, as well as the audiences of all the lectures, classes, and seminars I have devoted to this theme in many universities during all this time. I warmly thank all the colleagues and friends who—in Italy, Europe, America, and Israel—have accompanied and gladdened me deeply in my research and academic service for two decades by now, and to all those who assist me in everything, at University, at home, and everywhere. First and foremost, I testify to Heaven's awesome help. Special gratitude I wish to express to Professor Jan den Boeft, the anonymous readers and the Board of Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, as well as to Mattie Kuiper, Peter Buschman, and Brill. Many thanks also to Syd Palmer for the laborious task of preparing the indexes. I am profoundly honoured that my work has been received in this prestigious Series.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Ad Autol.	Ad Autolyicum (To Autolytus)
Ad Cand.	Ad Candidum (To Candidus)
Ad mon.	Sententiae ad monachos (Sentences to Monks)
Ad seips.	Ad seipsum (To Himself)
Adn. in Marc.	Adnotationes in Marcianum (Exegetical Notes on Martianus Capella)
Adult.	De adulteratione librorum Origenis (On the Tampering with Origen's Works)
Adumbr. in Iud.	Adumbrationes in Iudices (Hypotyposeis or Outlines on Judges)
Adumbr. in Eccl.	Adumbrationes in Ecclesiastem (Hypotyposeis or Outlines on Ecclesiastes)
Adv. Ar.	Adversus Arium / Arianos (Against Arius / the Arians)
Adv. eos qui cast. (aegre fer.)	Adversus eos qui castigationes aegre ferunt (Against Those Who Hardly Tolerate Reproaches)
Adv. Iud.	Adversus Iudaeos (Against the Jews)
Adv. Man.	Adversus Manichaeos (Against the Manichaeans)
Adv. Marc.	Adversus Marcionem (Against Marcion)
Adv. Pag.	Adversus Paganos (Against the Pagans)
Adv. Ruf.	Adversus Rufinum (Against Rufinus); cf. Apol. adv. libr. Ruf.
AH	Adversus haereses (Against Heresies)
AI	Antiquitates Iudaicae (Jewish Antiquities)
Al. Sev.	Vita Alexandri Severi (The Life of Severus Alexander), in the Historia Augusta
Amb. (ad Thom.)	Ambigua ad Thomam (Doubtful Points, to Thomas)
Amb. ad Io.	Ambigua ad Io(h)annem (Doubtful Points, to John)
Anc.	Ancoratus (The Anchored)
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i> , hrsg. Hildegard Temporini und Wolfgang Haase, Berlin–New York
Anth.	Anthologium (Anthology)
Antirrh.	Antirrheticus (Refutation)
Apocr.	Apocriticus (Respondent)
Apol.	Apologia (Apology)
Apol. adv. libr. Ruf.	Apologia adversus librum Rufini (Apology against Rufinus's Book)
Apol. c. Hier.	Apologia contra Hieronymum (Apology against Jerome)
Apophth. patr.	Apophthegmata patrum (The Sayings of the Fathers)
Ascens.	In ascensionem Christi oratio (Oration on the Ascension of Christ)
Astr.	Astronomica (Astronomy)
Aug.	Augustinus (Augustine)

Aut.	Ad Autolyicum (To Autolycus)
Bibl.	Bibliotheca (Library)
Bibl. Or.	Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana (Assemani)
Bon. mort.	De bono mortis (Death Is a Good)
C. Acad.	Contra Academicos (Against the Academics)
Car.	Capita de caritate (Chapters on Christian Love)
Carm. dogm.	Carmina dogmatica (Dogmatic Poems)
Carm. mor.	Carmina moralia (Moral Poems)
Carm. Nis.	Carmina Nisibena (Nisibis Poems)
C. Aster.	Contra Asterium
Cat.	Catena
Cat(ech).	Catechesis
CC	Contra Celsum (Against Celsus)
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, Turnhout
CCG	Corpus Christianorum, series Graeca, Turnhout
CCL	Corpus Christianorum, series Latina, Turnhout
CCT	Corpus Christianorum in Translation, Turnhout
CD	De civitate Dei (The City of God)
CE	Contra Eunomium (Against Eunomius), by Gregory of Nyssa
CELAMA	Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, Turnhout
C. Eun.	Contra Eunomium (Against Eunomius), by Basil of Caesarea
C. Eun. or. prodial.	Contra Eunomium oratio prodialis
C. fatum	Contra fatum (Against Fate)
C. Io.	Contra Iovinianum (Against Jovinian)
C. Iul.	Contra Iulianum (Against Julian)
C. Manich.	Contra Manichaeos (Against the Manichaeans)
C. Marcell.	Contra Marcellum (Against Marcellus of Ancyra)
C. Novat.	Contra Novatianum (Against Novatian)
Cod.	Codex
Comm.	Commonitorium (in the case of Vincent of Lérins) or Commentarii (Commentary)
Comm. in Ap.	Commentarii in Apocalypsin (Commentary on the Apocalypse or Revelation)
Comm. in Cant.	Commentarii in Canticum Canticorum (Commentary on the Song of Songs)
Comm. in II Cor.	Commentarii in S. Pauli epistulam secundam ad Corinthios (Commentary on 2 Corinthians)
Comm. in Dan.	Commentarii in Daniel (Commentary on Daniel)
Comm. in Diat.	Commentarii in Tatiani Diatessaron (Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron)
Comm. in Eccl.	Commentarii in Ecclesiasten (Commentary on Ecclesiastes)
Comm. in Eph.	Commentarii in S. Pauli epistulam ad Ephesios (Commentary on Ephesians)
Comm. in Ez.	Commentarii in Ezechielem (Commentary on Ezechiel)
Comm. in Gal.	Commentarii in S. Pauli epistulam ad Galatas (Commentary on Galatians)

Comm. in Io.	Commentarii in Evangelium secundum Io(h)annem (Commentary on John)
Comm. in Iob	Commentarii in Iob (Commentary on Job)
Comm. in Is.	Commentarii in Isaiam (Commentary on Isaiah)
Comm. in Matth.	Commentarii in Evangelium secundum Matt(h)aeum (Commentary on Matthew)
Comm. in Matth. Ser.	Commentariorum series in Evangelium secundum Matt(h)-aeum (Commentary Series on Matthew)
Comm. in Os.	Commentarii in Oseam (Commentary on Hosea)
Comm. in Prov.	Commentarii in Proverbia (Commentary on Proverbs)
Comm. in Ps.	Commentarii in Psalmos (Commentary on Psalms)
Comm. in Proph. min.	Commentarii in Prophetas minores (Commentary on the Minor Prophets)
Comm. in Rom.	Commentarii in S. Pauli epistulam ad Romanos (Commentary on Romans)
Comm. in Tit.	Commentarii in S. Pauli epistulam ad Titum (Commentary on Titus)
Comm. in Zach.	Commentarii in Zachariam (Commentary on Zechariah)
Comp.	Haereticarum fabularum compendium (Compendium of Heretic False Stories); cf. Haer. fab. comp.
Congr.	De congressu eruditionis causa (Meeting for the Sake of Learning)
Cons. ad aegr.	Consolatio ad aegrotos (Consolation to the Ill)
Const. Or. ad sanct. coet.	Constantini Oratio ad sanctorum coetum (Constantine's Speech to the Gathering of Saints)
Contr. c. Apoll.	Contradictorium contra Apollinarium or Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium (Refutation of Apollinarius)
C. opin. Orig.	Contra opiniones Origenistarum (Against the Origenists' Ideas)
Corr. et grat.	De correptione et gratia (On Rebuke and Grace)
CPG	<i>Clavis Patrum Graecorum</i> , ed. M. Geerard, 5 vols. (Turnhout, 1974–1987)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, Vienna
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Louvain
Cur.	Affectionum Graecarum curatio (Therapy against the Illnesses of the Greeks)
C. usur.	Contra usurarios (Against Usurers)
DE	Demonstratio evangelica (Demonstration of the Gospel)
De abst.	De abstinencia (Abstaining from Eating Flesh)
De adult. libr. Or.	De adulteratione librorum Origenis (On the Tampering with Origen's Works)
De an.	De anima (On the Soul), by Iamblichus
De an.	De anima et resurrectione (On the Soul and the Resurrection), by Gregory Nyssen
De (S.) Bapt.	De (Sancto) Baptismo / In Sanctum Baptisma (On the Holy Baptism)
De beat.	De beatitudinibus (On the Beatitudes)

De benef.	De beneficentia (On Doing Good)
Decal.	De decalogo (On the Decalogue)
De carne Chr.	De carne Christi (On Christ's Flesh)
De cor.	De corona (On the Military Wreath)
Decr.	De decretis Nicaenae synodi (On the Decrees of the Council of Nicaea)
De Deit. adv. Evagr.	De Deitate adversus Evagrium (On the Divinity, against Evagrius)
De Dom.	De Domno (On Bardaisan's Domnus)
De fac.	De facie orbis lunae (The Face on the Moon Disk)
De fid.	De fide (On Faith)
De gestis Pel.	De gestis Pelagii (What Pelagius Did)
De haer.	De haeresibus (On Heresies)
De Incarn.	De Incarnatione (On the Incarnation)
De Inc. Verb.	De Incarnatione Verbi (On the Incarnation of the Logos)
De Indur.	De Induratione (On the Hardening of Heart)
De inf.	De infantibus praemature abreptis (On Babies Who Are Prematurely Snatched Away from This World)
Dem.	Demonstratio (Demonstration)
De mor.	De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum (The Customs of the Catholic Church and Those of the Manichaeans)
De mort.	De mortuis non esse dolendum (The Dead Should Not Be Grieved)
DN	De divinis nominibus (On the Names of God)
De ob. Sat.	De obitu Satyri (On the Death of Satyrus)
De ob. Theod.	De obitu Theodosii (On the Death of Theodosius)
De ob. Val.	De obitu Valentiniani (On the Death of Valentinian)
De or.	De oratione (On Prayer)
De or. dom.	De oratione dominica (On the Lord's Prayer)
De paup. am.	De pauperum amore (On Love for the Poor)
De pecc. orig.	De peccato originali (On the Original Sin)
De perf.	De perfectione Christiana (On Christian Perfection)
De prem.	De premiis et poenis (On Rewards and Punishments)
De remiss. pecc.	De remissione peccatorum (On the Remission of Sins)
De res.	De resurrectione (On the Resurrection)
De scr. eccl.	De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis (On Authors Belonging to the Church)
De ser. num. vind.	De sera numinis vindicta (On Slow Punishment by God)
De Spir. S.	De Spiritu Sancto (On the Holy Spirit)
De trid. sp.	De tridui spatio (On the Three Days between the Death and the Resurrection of Christ)
Deus inm.	Quod Deus immutabilis sit (God Is Immutable)
De v. Mos.	De vita Mo(y)sis (On the Life of Moses)
Dial.	Dialogus (Dialogue); or Dialogus cum Tryphone (Dialogue with Trypho) in Justin's case; or Dialogus de vita Iohannis Chrysostomi (Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom) ascribed to Palladius: see also Dial. Ioh. Chrys.

Dial. c. Pel.	Dialogus contra Pelagianos (Dialogue against the Pelagians)
Dial. Her.	Dialogus cum Heraclide (Dialogue with Heraclides)
Dial. Ioh. Chrys.	Dialogus de vita Iohannis Chrysostomi (Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom)
Didasc.	Didascalicus, Didaskalikos
Div.	Quis dives salvetur (Who is the Rich Man Who Is Saved?)
Dox. Gr.	Doxographi Graeci (Greek Doxographers)
EH	Ecclesiastica hierarchia (The Hierarchy of the Church)
Eccl. theol.	Ecclesiastica theologia (The Theology of the Church)
Ecl. pr.	Eclogae propheticae (Prophetic Selections)
Enarr. in Is.	Enarrationes in Isaia (Elucidations of Isaiah)
Enarr. in Ps.	Enarrationes in Psalmos (Elucidations of Psalms)
Ench. ad Laur.	Enchiridion ad Laurentium (Handbook, to Laurentius)
Enn.	Enneades (Enneads)
Ep.	Epistula (Letter)
Ep. ad Afr.	Epistula ad Africanum (Letter to Africanus)
Ep. ad Avit.	Epistula ad Avitum (Letter to Avitus)
<i>Ep. ad Eph.</i>	<i>Epistula ad Ephesios</i> (Letter to the Ephesians) by Ignatius
Ep. ad Mel.	Epistula ad Melaniam (Letter to Melania)
Ep. ad Pol.	Epistula ad Polycarpum (Letter to Polycarp)
Ep. ad Serap.	Epistula ad Serapionem (Letter to Sarapion)
Ep. ad Simpl.	Epistula ad Simplicianum (Letter to Simplicianus)
<i>Ep. ad Smyrn.</i>	<i>Epistula ad Smyrnaeos</i> (Letter to the Inhabitants of Smyrna)
Ep. ad Theod. laps.	Epistula ad Theodorum lapsum (Letter to Theodore Who Has Fallen)
Ep. de fid.	Epistula de fide (Letter on Faith)
Ep. Pasch.	Epistulae Paschales (Paschal Letters)
Eul.	Ad Eulogium (Treatise to the Monk Eulogius)
Evang. Nicod.	Evangelium Nicodemi (Gospel of Nicodemus)
Exc. fratr.	In excessum fratris (On the Death of His [sc. Ambrose's] Brother)
Exh. ad mart.	Exhortatio ad martyrium (Exhortation to Martyrdom; Protrepitic to Martyrdom)
Exh. ad mon.	Exhortatio / Paraenesis ad monachos (Exhortation to the Monks)
Exp. in Ps.	Explanatio / Expositio in Psalmos (Explanation / Clarification of Psalms)
Exp. in Prov.	Explanatio / Expositio in Proverbia (Explanation / Clarification of Proverbs)
Exp. Ps. 118	Expositio in Psalmum CXVIII (Clarification of Psalm 118)
Fr. in Hebr.	Fragmenta in epistulam ad Hebraeos (Fragments from the Exegesis of Hebrews)
Fr. in Eph.	Fragmenta in S. Pauli epistulam ad Ephesios (Fragments from the Exegesis of Ephesians)
Fr. in Ex.	Fragmenta in Exodum (Fragments from the Exegesis of Exodus)
Fr. in Ier.	Fragmenta in Ieremiam (Fragments from the Exegesis of Jeremiah)



Fr. in Io.	Fragmenta in Evangelium secundum Io(h)annem (Fragments from the Exegesis of John)
Fr. in Matt(h).	Fragmenta in Evangelium secundum Matt(h)aeum (Fragments from the Exegesis of Matthew)
Fr. in Ps.	Fragmenta in Psalmos (Fragments from the Exegesis of Psalms)
Fr. in Prov.	Fragmenta in Proverbia (Fragments from the Exegesis of Proverbs)
Fr. in Rom.	Fragmenta in S. Pauli epistulam ad Romanos (Fragments from the Exegesis of Romans)
Fr. in Tit.	Fragmenta in S. Pauli epistulam ad Titum (Fragments from the Exegesis of Titus)
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller, Leipzig, then Berlin.
Gen. adv. Man.	De Genesi adversus Manichaeos (On Genesis, Against the Manichaeans)
GNO	<i>Gregorii Nysseni Opera</i> , ed. Werner Jaeger <i>et alii</i> , Leiden: Brill
Gnost.	Gnosticus
Gord. Mart.	In Gordium Martyrem (On the Martyr Gordius)
Gorg.	Gorgias
Grat.	De gratia Dei et humanae mentis libero arbitrio (On God's Grace and Human Mind's Free Will)
Haer. fab. comp.	Haereticarum fabularum compendium (Compendium of Heretic False Stories); cf. Comp.
HE	Historia Ecclesiastica (Church History)
Her.	Rerum divinarum heres (The Heir of the Divine Goods)
Hex.	In Hexaemeron (On the Six Days of Creation)
Hier.	Hieronymus (Jerome)
HL	Historia Lausiaca (Lausiac History)
Hom.	Homiliae (Homilies)
Hom. cat.	Homiliae catecheticae (Catechetical Homilies)
Hom. exh. Bapt.	Homilia exhortatoria ad Baptisma (Homily that Exhorts People to Baptism)
Hom. de grat. act.	Homilia de gratiarum actione (Homily on Thanksgiving)
Hom. in Col.	Homiliae in S. Pauli apostoli epistulam ad Colossenses (Homilies on Colossians)
Hom. in Ex.	Homiliae in Exodum (Homilies on Exodus)
Hom. in Ez.	Homiliae in Ezechielem (Homilies on Ezekiel)
Hom. in Gen.	Homiliae in Genesim (Homilies on Genesis)
Hom. in Ier.	Homiliae in Ieremiam (Homilies on Jeremiah)
Hom. in Ies. Nav.	Homiliae in Iesum Nave (Homilies on Joshua)
Hom. in Iob	Homiliae in Iob (Homilies on Job)
Hom. in Ioh.	Homiliae in Evangelium secundum Io(h)annem (Homilies on John)
Hom. in Iud.	Homiliae in Iudices (Homilies on Judges)
Hom. in Lac.	Homilia dicta in Lacisis (Homily So-Called In Lacisis); see also Or. in Lacisis
Hom. in Lev.	Homiliae in Leviticum (Homilies on Leviticus)

Hom. in Luc.	Homiliae in Evangelium secundum Lucam (Homilies on Luke)
Hom. in Num.	Homiliae in Numeros (Homilies on Numbers)
Hom. in Phil.	Homiliae in S. Pauli apostoli epistulam ad Philippenses (Homilies on Philippians)
Hom. in Ps.	Homiliae in Psalmos (Homilies on Psalms)
Hom. in Reg.	Homiliae in Reges (Homilies on Kings)
Hom. op.	De hominis opificio (On the Creation of the Human Being)
Hymn. adv. Iul.	Hymni adversus Iulianum (Hymns against Julian)
Hymn. c. haer.	Hymni contra haereses (Hymns against Heresies)
Hymn. de azym.	Hymni de azymis (Hymns on the Unleavened Bread)
Hymn. de cruc.	Hymni de cruce (Hymns on the Cross)
Hymn. de fide	Hymni de fide (Hymns on Faith)
Hymn. de Nat.	Hymni de Nativitate (Hymns on Christmas)
Hymn. de Par.	Hymni de Paradiso (Hymns on Paradise)
Hymn. de virg.	Hymni de virginitate (Hymns on Virginity)
In Ar. Gen. et corr.	In Aristotelis De generatione et corruptione (Commentary on Aristotle's On Generation and Corruption)
In Ar. Phys.	In Aristotelis Physica (Commentary on Aristotle's Physics)
In Bas. fr.	In Basilium fratrem (On His Brother Basil)
In Cant.	In Canticum Canticorum (On the Song of Songs)
In I Cor.	In S. Pauli Apostoli epistulam primam ad Corinthios (On 1 Corinthians)
Incarn.	De Incarnatione (On the Incarnation)
In Eccl.	In Ecclesiasten (On Ecclesiastes or Qohelet)
In Eph.	In S. Pauli Apostoli epistulam ad Ephesios (On Ephesians)
In Ez.	In Ezechielem (On Ezekiel)
In Hebr.	In epistulam ad Hebraeos (On Hebrews)
In Ies. Nav.	In Iesum Nave (On Joshua)
<i>In illud</i>	<i>In illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius</i> (On 1 Cor 15:28: "Then the Son Himself...")
In Io.	In Evangelium secundum Io(h)annem (On the Gospel of John)
In inscr. Ps.	In inscriptiones Psalmorum or De inscriptionibus Psalmorum (On the Titles of the Psalms)
In Luc.	In Evangelium secundum Lucam (On Luke)
In Matth.	In Evangelium secundum Matthaeum (On Matthew)
In Phil.	In S. Pauli Apostoli epistulam ad Philippenses (On Philippians)
In Or. Dom.	In Orationem Dominicam (On the Lord's Prayer)
In Philem.	In S. Pauli Apostoli epistulam ad Philemonem (On Philemon)
In Ps.	In Psalmos (On Psalms)
In Pulch.	Oratio in Pulcheriam (Funeral Oration for Pulcheria); see also Or. in Pulch.
In sex. Ps.	In sextum Psalmum (On Psalm 6)
Inst.	Divinae institutiones (Divine Teachings)
In I Thess.	In S. Pauli Apostoli epistulam primam ad Thessalonicenses (On 1 Thessalonians)
In II Thess.	In S. Pauli Apostoli epistulam secundam ad Thessalonicenses (On 2 Thessalonians)

In I Tim.	In S. Pauli Apostoli epistulam primam ad Timotheum (On 1 Timothy)
In II Tim.	In S. Pauli Apostoli epistulam secundam ad Timotheum (On 2 Timothy)
In Tit.	In S. Pauli Apostoli epistulam ad Titum (On Titus)
Jac.	Jacob de vita beata (Jacob, On Happy Life)
<i>Kephal.</i>	<i>Kephalaia</i> ( <i>Chapters</i> ) in Isaac of Nineveh
KG	Kephalaia Gnostica (Chapters on Knowledge)
KP	Kephalaia Practica (Chapters on Practical Virtue)
LA	Legum allegoriae (The Allegories of the Laws)
Laud. Const.	Laudes Constantini (Praise of Constantine)
Lect. in Amos	Lectiones in Amos (Lectures on Amos)
Leg.	Leges (Laws)
Lib.	Liber (Book)
Lib. adv. Orig.	Liber adversus Origenem (Book against Origen)
Lib. arb.	De libero arbitrio (On Free Will)
Lib. ascet.	Liber asceticus (Book on Asceticism)
LXX	<i>Septuaginta</i> (Septuagint, the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible)
Mag. disc.	Colloquium magistri cum discipulo eius (Dialogue between the Teacher and His Disciple)
Mart.	De martyribus Palaestinae (The Martyrs of Palestine)
Method.	Methodius (of Olympus)
MT	Mystica theologia (Mystical Theology)
Myst.	Mystagogia (Mystagogy)
NH	De natura hominis (On the Nature of the Human Being)
NHC	Nag Hammadi Codex
NT	New Testament
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta, Leuven
Od. Sal.	Odae Salomonis (Odes of Solomon)
Op. theol.	Opera theologica (Theological Works)
Or.	Oratio (Oration)
(Const.) Or. ad sanct. coet.	Constantini Oratio ad sanctorum coetum (Constantine's Speech to the Gathering of the Saints)
Or. cat.	Oratio catechetica magna (Great Catechetical Oration)
Ord.	De ordine (On Order)
Or. fun. in Caes.	Oratio funebris in Caesarium (Funeral Oration for Caesarius)
Or. fun. in Bas.	Oratio funebris in Basilium (Funeral Oration for Basil)
Or. in Lacisis	Oratio dicta in Lacisis (Oration So-Called In Lacisis); see also Hom. in Lac.
Or. in Pulch.	Oratio in Pulcheriam (Funeral Oration for Pulcheria); see also In Pulch.
OT	Old Testament or Hebrew Bible
Paed.	Paedagogus (The Pedagogue)
Pall.	Palladius
Pan.	Panarion
Par.	De Paradiso (On Paradise)

PE	Praeparatio evangelica (Preparation for the Gospel)
Per(iph).	Periphyseon (On Natures)
PG	Patrologia Graeca (Migne)
PH	Patmut'iwn Hayoc' (History of the Greater Armenia)
Phaed.	Phaedo
Phaedr.	Phaedrus
Philoc.	Philocalia
Phot.	Photius
PL	Patrologia Latina (Migne)
PO	Patrologia Orientalis, Paris
Pract.	Practicus
Praef. in Orig. hom.	Praefatio in Origenis homilias in Ezechielem (Preface to the Translation of Origen's Homilies on Ezechiel)
Praed.	Praedestinus (The Predestined); or De praedestinatione (On Predestination)
<i>praes.</i>	<i>praesertim</i> (especially; in particular)
Princ.	De principiis, Περὶ ἀρχῶν (On First Principles)
<i>prol.</i>	<i>prologus</i> (Prologue, Introduction)
Proll.	Prolegomena in Aristotelis Categorias (Introduction to Aristotle's Categories)
Protr.	Protrepticus (Protreptic)
Q.	Quaestiones et responsiones (Questions and Answers) in the case of Anastasius of Sinai
Q. ad Thal.	Quaestiones ad Thalassium (Problems / Questions, to Thalassius)
Quaest.	Quaestiones (Problems, Questions)
Quaest. ad Ant.	Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem (Problems / Questions, to Leader Antiochus)
Q. et dub.	Quaestiones et dubia (Questions and Dubious Points)
Ref.	Refutatio omnium haereseon (Refutation of all Heresies)
Ref. conf. Eun.	Refutatio confessionis Eunomii (Refutation of Eunomius's Confession of Faith)
Resp.	Respublica (Republic)
Retr.	Retractationes (Retractions)
Rhet.	Rhetorica (Rhetoric)
RN	De rerum natura (On Nature)
RSV	Revised Standard Version (of the Bible)
Schol. in Ap.	Scholia in Apocalypsin (Scholia on the Apocalypse / Revelation)
Schol. in Luc.	Scholia in Evangelium secundum Lucam (Scholia on Luke)
Schol. in Prov.	Scholia in Proverbia (Scholia on Proverbs)
Schol. in Ps.	Scholia in Psalmos (Scholia on Psalms)
Sel. in Ex.	Selecta in Exodum (Selected Passages that Comment on Exodus)
Sel. in Ps.	Selecta in Psalmos (Selected Passages that Comment on Psalms)
Serm.	Sermones (Sermons)

Serm. in Gen.	Sermones in Genesim (Sermons on Genesis)
Serm. in Hex.	Sermones in Hexaemeron (Sermons on the Six Days of Creation)
Serm. in Pent.	Sermo in Pentecosten (Sermon on Pentecost)
Sim.	Similitudo (Simile), in the Shepherd of Hermas
S. Iul. mart.	Sanctus Iulianus martyr (St. Julian Martyr)
Stob.	Iohannes Stobaeus, <i>Anthologium</i> , <i>Florilegium</i> (John Stobaeus, <i>Anthology</i> )
Strom.	Stromateis (Miscellany)
SVF	Stoicorum veterum fragmenta, ed. Hans von Arnim
Syll.	Syllogismi (Syllogisms)
Symp.	Symposium (The Banquet)
Test. Zab.	Testamentum Zabulon (Testament of Zebulon)
Test. Levi	Testamentum Levi (Testament of Levi)
Theaet.	Theaetetus
Theoph.	Theophania (Theophany)
TM	Theologia Mystica (Mystical Theology)
Tom. ad Ant.	Tomus ad Antiochenos (To the Antiochians)
Trin.	De Trinitate (On the Trinity)
Tr. in Ps.	Tractatus in Psalmos (Treatises on Psalms)
VC	Vita Constantini (The Life of Constantine)
VCS	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, Leiden: Brill
V. Cyr.	Vita Cyriaci (The Life of Cyriacus)
V. Greg. Thaum.	Vita Gregorii Thaumaturgi (The Life of Gregory the Wonderworker)
VI	De viris illustribus (Distinguished People)
V. Sab.	Vita S. Sabae (The Life of St. Sabas / Mar Saba)

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ROOTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF APOKATASTASIS

Τέλος διδάσκει τὴν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀποκατάστασιν.

St. Paul “teaches that the ultimate end is the restoration we hope for.”

(Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2,22,134,4)

*By Way of Introduction: What Is Apokatastasis?  
And How Does the Present Research  
Contribute to Advancing Scholarship?*

The noun ἀποκατάστασις, related to the verb ἀποκαθίστημι, “I restore, reintegrate, reconstitute, return,” bears the fundamental meaning of “restoration, reintegration, reconstitution.”<sup>1</sup> This term had a variety of applications in antiquity, but as a Christian and a late-antique philosophical doctrine (to be found also in pagan Neoplatonism, for instance in Macrobius<sup>2</sup>), it came to indicate the theory of universal restoration, that is, of the return of all beings, or at least all rational beings or all humans, to the Good, i.e. God, in the end. Although Origen is credited with being the founder of this doctrine in Christianity, I shall argue that he had several antecedents. I shall also argue that this doctrine was abundantly received throughout the Patristic era, up to the one who can be regarded as the last of the Fathers: John Eriugena.

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<sup>1</sup> This initial section, at its latest stage, was presented as a lecture at the University of Bergen in February 2012. I am very grateful to all those who attended it for the engaging discussion, and especially to Einar Thomassen. An earlier draft was presented as a lecture, “At the Roots of the Doctrine of Apokatastasis,” at the University of Chicago, Divinity School, in February 2009. I warmly thank Richard Rosengarten and Margaret Mitchell and all the participants as well.

<sup>2</sup> See I. Ramelli, “The Debate on Apokatastasis in Pagan and Christian Platonists (Marianus, Macrobius, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine),” *Illinois Classical Studies* 33–34 (2008–2009) 201–234. I suspect that, although Macrobius was probably a “pagan” and also somewhat hostile to Christianity, he may have supported universal restoration—even to the point of ascribing it to Plato, with a clear distortion—under the influence of the Christian apokatastasis doctrine. Of course, he and other “pagan” Platonists would have never acknowledged such an influence. But a separate work on “pagan” philosophical theories of apokatastasis will be needed.

The present investigation is scholarly needed, as there is very little or no systematic research into the emergence and development of the Christian theory of apokatastasis, from the very beginning of Christianity up to Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. A recent and noteworthy book on the doctrine of apokatastasis, or more precisely on Christian theories of universal salvation,<sup>3</sup> only includes two thinkers from that period (although it spans eighteen centuries): Origen, surveyed by Tom Greggs, and Gregory of Nyssa, treated by Steve Harmon. My analysis will extend to the whole of the Patristic age, from the New Testament—and indeed the whole of the Bible, which is the basis for any Patristic speculation—to John the Scot Eriugena, who can be considered to have been the last great Patristic philosopher, whose thought was nourished by the best of Greek Patristics. Another respectable scholarly study, by Christine Janowski,<sup>4</sup> apart from being very difficult to retrieve and unaccessible to sole-English readers, is a work of systematic theology more than a historical investigation;<sup>5</sup> moreover, it focuses on the notion of universal redemption or forgiveness rather than on the specific concept of apokatastasis and its relevant terminology and philosophical and Scriptural background.<sup>6</sup> Of course, there are some manuals of eschatology

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<sup>3</sup> *All Shall Be Well: Explorations in Universal Salvation and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann*, ed. G. MacDonald (Cambridge, 2011). In the introduction, Gregory MacDonald argues that disagreements about universal salvation should not be seen as debates between “the orthodox” and “heretics,” but rather as internal debates among groups of Christians. The present study is not primarily concerned about “orthodoxy” and “heresy,” but one of the elements that will emerge from it is precisely that the vast majority of the supporters of apokatastasis in the Patristic era were “orthodox” and some of them, such as Origen, Gregory Nyssen and Eriugena, even elaborated this doctrine precisely in the context of a defence of orthodoxy against “heretics” (respectively “Gnostics” and Marcionites, “neo-Arians,” and predestinationists).

<sup>4</sup> *Allerlösung: Annäherung an eine entdualisierte Eschatologie*, Neukirchener Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie 23 (Neukirchen–Vluyn, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> The same is the case with A. Thiselton, *Life after Death. A New Approach to the Last Things* (Grand Rapids, 2011), which, moreover, does not explicitly focus on the doctrine of apokatastasis, but is a theological book on eschatology.

<sup>6</sup> Within the contemporary Christian panorama, the debate on soteriological universalism is alive, as results even just from the bibliographical appendix in my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima e la resurrezione* (Milan, 2007—an older bibliographical survey is found in G. Müller, *Ἀποκατάστασις πάντων. A Bibliography* [Basel, 1969]). This, in all confessions and denominations. E.g., in 1961 the Unitarian Universalist Association was founded; the church called New Dimension, established by the Pentecostal bishop Carlton Pearson, supports soteriological universalism. On 7.IV.2008 the Orthodox bishop Hilarion of Vienna at the first world congress on Divine Mercy observed that the Orthodox concept of hell corresponds to the Catholic concept of Purgatory. Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, an Orthodox monk and metropolitan of Dioclea, in *How Are We Saved? The Understanding of Salvation in the Ortho*

that include a treatment of the Patristic era, and very few at that,<sup>7</sup> but these do not focus on apokatastasis and are very compendious; moreover, only Daley's is accessible to sole-English speakers.<sup>8</sup>

In an important passage of Origen's Commentary on John (1,16,91), ἀποκατάστασις explicitly refers to the eventual restoration of all, when there will be no evil left, and all enemies will be no more enemies, but friends, in a universal reconciliation. But the last enemy, death, which is not a creature of God, will be utterly annihilated, according to Paul's revelation in 1 Cor 15:24–26:<sup>9</sup>

The end [τὸ τέλος] will be at the so-called apokatastasis [ἐν τῇ λεγομένῃ ἀποκαταστάσει], in that no one, then, will be left an enemy [διὰ τὸ μηδένα καταλείπεισθαι τότε ἐχθρόν], if it is true that "he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, while the last enemy will be radically eliminated: death" [ἔσχατος δὲ ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται, ὁ θάνατος].

It is to be noticed that Origen himself in this passage defines apokatastasis as "the so-called apokatastasis," thus indicating that he is taking this term from a tradition: not only from texts that have the concept but not the word, such

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*dox Tradition* (Light&Life, 1996), shows that the doctrine of apokatastasis is part and parcel of the Orthodox tradition. In 2005 Card. Murphy O'Connor, the Catholic archbishop of Westminster, observed that the doctrine of universal salvation is compatible with the Catholic faith. John Paul II, who wanted to create Hans Urs von Balthasar a cardinal before his death, on 28.VII.1999 declared that eternal damnation remains a possibility, but humans cannot know whether it will involve human beings, and which. In a message to the general Abbes of the order of "SS. Salvatore di S. Brigida" he defined Christ "the eternal, invincible guarantor of universal salvation." On 24.V.1989 he defined the work of Christ as aiming at "universal salvation," and the Holy Spirit as "the guarantor of the definitive triumph over sin and the world that is subject to sin, in order to liberate it from sin." In his Encyclical letter *Redemptor hominis* he declared that "every human being" has been included in the mystery of Redemption, and Christ "has united himself with each one, even when the human being is unaware of this." See also below, the Conclusions of the present monograph.

<sup>7</sup> B. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1991), taken over now in Id., "Eschatology in the Early Church Fathers," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. J.L. Walls (Oxford, 2007), 91 ff.; H. Pietras, *L'escatologia della Chiesa. Dagli scritti giudaici fino al IV secolo* (Rome, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> There are some chapters on eschatology in other handbooks on theology, but very little on the Fathers and still less on apokatastasis. See, e.g., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Philosophical Theology*, ed. Ch. Taliaferro–Ch. Meister (Cambridge, 2010): here W. Hasher, "Eternity and Providence," 81–92, and T.L. Walls, "Heaven and Hell," 253–258, which do not focus on Patristics, as well as A. Louth, "Eastern Orthodox Eschatology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, 233–247; T. Talbot, "Universalism," *ibid.*, 446–461.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. I. Ramelli, "1 Cor 15:24–26: Submission of Enemies and Annihilation of Evil and Death. A Case for a New Translation and a History of Interpretation," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 74,2 (2008) 241–258.



as the *Apocalypse of Peter* (as I shall show), but from texts that had both the word and the concept. Now, I think that this tradition is represented not only by Clement of Alexandria, who uses ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι rather frequently in a spiritual sense<sup>10</sup> and whose work Origen knew very well, but also by the NT, and in particular Acts 3:21, in which the key term ἀποκατάστασις appears and designates the eschatological restoration, as I shall argue.

The term ἀποκατάστασις is referred by Eusebius to the Stoics' cosmological conception of the cyclical return of the universe to its original condition at the end of every great year, to which I shall come back in a moment: "The common *logos*, that is, the common nature, becomes more and more abundant, and in the end dries up everything and resolves everything into itself. It returns to the first *logos* and the famous 'resurrection' [ἀνάστασις] that makes the great year, when the universal restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] takes place" (*PE* 15,19,1–3). The Stoics' use of this term was related to its astronomical meaning, one of the many that this noun bore in antiquity. In the whole Bible, the very term ἀποκατάστασις is unattested, apart from Acts 3:21, whereas it is attested in Philo (*Her.* 293), who applies it to the restoration of the soul to perfection. Indeed, in the first century BCE and in the first CE, several occurrences of the noun ἀποκατάστασις are found, both in technical meanings (medical, astronomical, tactical, political) and in a spiritual sense, which is the most relevant to the present research.

In the fragments of the astronomical work of Antiochus from cod. Parisinus, 8, 3, 108, 14, a chapter is attested concerning "the great years and the perfect return [ἀποκατάστασις] of the seven planets to their original positions." And in the Greek astronomical fragments of Dorotheus, 380,14–15, we find attested not only the apokatastasis of celestial bodies, but also their antapokatastasis, i.e. their return, not to their original position, but to the position that is diametrically opposed to it; this is called ἀνταποκατάστασις. In Geminus the expression "the fourth part of ἀποκατάστασις" (*Astr.* 18,18,3) means the fourth part of the time employed by a celestial body to return to its original position.<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 10,4–5 the example is that of the apokatastasis of the moon, and the question at stake is the calculation of its duration.<sup>12</sup> And

<sup>10</sup> See my "Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation," *Harvard Theological Review* 102 (2009) 135–168.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 11,1: "in each revolution [ἀποκατάστασις] there are four equal times."

<sup>12</sup> "If we wish to discover in how many days the moon completes one revolution [ἀποκατάστασις], we must divide the number of the days by the number of revolutions." Cf. *ibid.* 3,4.

ibid. 2,8 Geminus offers the definition of an apokatastasis, or a whole revolution of the moon: “the time from the smallest movement to the smallest movement again is called revolution [ἀποκατάστασις]” (cf. ibid. 1,7). The revolution of the moon is indicated by means of the same term also in Plut. *De fac.* 937F3. A fragment from Thrasyllus’s astronomical work (8,3, 100,14–15) defines the apokatastasis of a heavenly body as its return from a constellation to the same constellation after a complete revolution. The mechanical meaning of the term is similar to the astronomical: the return of a wheel to its original position after one whole turn. For this period, this meaning is attested by Heron: “if one tooth of D falls within one full turn [ἀποκατάστασις] of M” (*Dioptra* 35bis, 14).<sup>13</sup>

The medical meaning of ἀποκατάστασις is mainly that of “healing,” “restoration to health,” or “replacement of a limb into its original position.” In the first century BCE and in the first CE it is attested, apart from the NT, in Apollonius’s commentary on Hippocrates’ *De articulis*, 30,38: “It is necessary to bring about the restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] of the above-mentioned limb in the following way” (cf. 10,37: “the tension in the right direction produces the restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] of the limbs to their original place”). Indeed, since illness is against nature, restoration to health can be said to be the restoration into a state that is according to nature: εἰς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἀποκατάστασις ἔσται (8,18), and the action of putting a displaced limb back to its own place is said to be its ἀποκατάστασις in 2,12. The therapeutic meaning of this noun is also attested by Archigenes in his medical fragments: “It is to be hoped that those who have fallen ill will be restored to health,” εἰς ἀποκατάστασιν ἀχθήσεσθαι (71,22). Moreover, examples of the military and logistic sense of ἀποκατάστασις are to be found in Asclepiodotus’s *Tactica*, 10,6,1,<sup>14</sup> where, again, the meaning is a return to the original disposition. The same value is found in Aelianus’s *Tactica*, 32,7,<sup>15</sup> and in Arrianus’s *Tactica* (25,12; cf. 21,4). A historian attests to the cosmological meaning of ἀποκατάστασις and relates it to the astrological meaning as well: Diodorus Siculus (12,36,2).<sup>16</sup> The meaning “restoration, reintegration” is also very clear in Diodorus, 16,10,3,8, where it is used in the phrase “restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] of the autonomy” as a parallel to “the elimination of tyranny.”

<sup>13</sup> Cf. 34,22; 34,72; 34,75; fr. 18,14; 18,20; 5,14.

<sup>14</sup> “The return [ἀποκατάστασις] to the place where the military division originally was.”

<sup>15</sup> “The military divisions will return to their original disposition” (τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀποκατάστασιν, cf. 25,7).

<sup>16</sup> “The stars return to their original position [τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν ποιεῖται] and complete a revolution as of a great year” (cf. 2,47,6,3: αἱ τῶν ἀστρῶν ἀποκαταστάσεις).

But the most interesting authors, for the purpose of the present investigation, are those belonging to Hellenistic Judaism in the first century BCE and the first CE. We find ἀποκατάστασις attested in the *Letter of Aristeas* (123,4), which testifies to its political meaning of restoration of someone after an exile or reconstitution of someone into his or her original condition.<sup>17</sup> Philo uses this noun in *Decal.* 164,3 to indicate the periodical restitution of the land to its owners (τῶν κληρουχιῶν ἀποκατάστασις εἰς τοὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς λαχόντας οἴκους) prescribed by the Mosaic Law, and describes this prescription as inspired by principles of justice and love for humanity—like the whole of the Law, as Philo endeavours to demonstrate. This meaning bears an affinity to that attested by Josephus (*AI* 11,63), in reference to the restoration of the Hebrews to their land: τῆς τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀποκαταστάσεως. The same author also testifies to the meaning of “restoration” in reference to a city in *AI* 11,98: “the restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] of Jerusalem.” The most interesting occurrence of the noun under investigation is in Philo, who in *Her.* 293 interprets the words in Gen 15:16 (LXX), “at the fourth generation they will return [ἀποστραφῇσονται] here,” allegorically, by observing that this was said “not only in order to indicate the time in which they will inhabit the holy Land, but also to present the perfect restoration of the soul [τελείαν ἀποκατάστασιν ψυχῆς].” The restoration or apokatastasis of the soul is its return to its original perfection, unsullied by sins. In fact, as Philo explains in 293–299, at the beginning it is like a wax tablet without any mark, but soon it begins to acquire evils (κακά) and sins: Gen 8:21 is cited. The arrival of πάθη or evil passions requires the intervention of philosophy, in its therapeutic function, with its reasoning that brings about health and preservation/salvation (λόγοις ὑγιεινοῖς καὶ σωτηρίοις). As a result, vigour and strength grow in the soul, which will be steadfast “in all virtues.” This is the restoration or apokatastasis of the soul, which, from sin, returns to its original purity, ἀποστραφεῖσα τοῦ διαμαρτάνειν, and “inherits wisdom.” This apokatastasis is also described as a restoration of the soul to health (ὑγίεια) after the abandonment of evil (ἀποστρεφόμενοι τὰ φαῦλα). This meaning of ἀποκατάστασις in reference to the restoration of the soul and indeed the attainment of perfection and beatitude is subsequently attested, as I shall point out,<sup>18</sup> in a Christian author who knew both Philo and the Bible very well: Clement of Alexandria, who, like Philo, was

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in the lexical work *De adfinium vocabulorum differentia*, probably due to Ammonius the grammarian, at entry 71 a lexical distinction is drawn between the rendering of an object, which is indicated with ἀπόδοσις, and the reintegration or restoration of a person into his or her previous state, which is indicated by ἀποκατάστασις.

<sup>18</sup> See below in Ch. 1, the section on Clement.

close to the so-called Middle Platonism. The notion of apokatastasis as the restoration of the soul also influenced Origen's concept of apokatastasis.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, antecedents of the Christian notion of apokatastasis are to be found in Philo, others in Scripture, and yet others in Greek philosophy, especially Stoicism. But Origen himself was aware of, and underlined, the profound differences that exist between the Stoic and the Christian doctrines of apokatastasis. In Stoic cosmology, apokatastasis indicates the periodical repetition of a cosmic cycle (SVF 2,599; 625), based on aeons (αἰῶνες) or "great years" that return again and again and are one identical to the others, or almost identical.<sup>20</sup> The same persons will exist in each aeon, and these will behave in the same ways, and will make the same choices, and the same events will happen, *in infinitum*. This succession of aeons is determined by periodical conflagrations (ἐκπυρώσεις) in which everything is resolved into the fire, i.e. the aether or Logos or pneuma—which coincides with Zeus, the supreme but immanent divinity—, in order to expand again into a new "whole." I have already quoted SVF 2,599, which comes from Eusebius *PE* 15,19,1–3, on the conflagration and the birth of a new whole, which is indicated by the terms ἀνάστασις and ἀποκατάστασις. SVF 2,625 comes from Nemesius, *NH* 38:

The Stoics maintain that the planets will return [ἀποκαθισταμένους] into the same constellation [...] Universal restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] takes place not only once, but many times, or better the same things will continue to be repeated [ἀποκαθίστασθαι] indefinitely, without end.

It is to be noticed that the terms ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι are only attested by Christian sources, such as Eusebius and Nemesius. Pagan sources such as Marcus Aurelius (*Ad seips.* 11,1,3), Simplicius (*In Ar. Phys.* 886,12–13), and Alexander of Aphrodisias (*In Ar. Gen. et corr.* 314,13–15) rather use παλιγγενεσία and πάλιν γίγνομαι. Καθίστημι is attested in a Greek fragment from Chrysippus on apokatastasis and preserved by another Christian author,

<sup>19</sup> See Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, 833, 843, 849, 883–900.

<sup>20</sup> For the difference between "identical" and "almost identical" in the attestations see J. Barnes, "La doctrine du retour éternel," in *Les Stoïciens et leur logique*, ed. J. Brunschwig (Paris, 1978), 3–20, *praes.* 9–12; A. Long, "The Stoics on World-Conflagration and Everlasting Recurrence," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 suppl. (1985) 13–38, *praes.* 26–31; R. Salles, "Tiempos, objetos, y sucesos en la metafísica estoica," *Diánoia* XLVII 49 (2002) 3–22, who, against Barnes, thinks that the Stoic notion of time as an incorporeal does not force the Stoics to maintain that what individualises a time in an aeon vis-à-vis one in another aeon are the qualities and dispositions of the bodies; Id.–J. Araiza–J. Molina, "Ortodoxia y heterodoxia en la idea estoica del eterno retorno," *Nova Tellus* 20 (2001) 127–181; M. Boeri, "Incorpóreos, tiempo, e individuación en el estoicismo," *Diánoia* XLVIII 51 (nov. 2003) 181–193.

Lactantius (*Inst.* 7,23 = SVF 2,623): “It is clear that it is not at all impossible that we too, after our death, once given cycles of time [περίοδοι χρόνου] have elapsed, are restored/reconstituted [καταστήσασθαι] into the structure that we presently have.”

The Stoics, in turn, were inspired by Heraclitus<sup>21</sup> mainly in relation to the role of fire and conflagrations, and by the Pythagoreans in relation to the “Great Year,” but they drew inspiration from Empedocles as well, especially with respect to the cosmic cycles depending on the prevalence of *Philia*, the uniting force, or *Neikos*, the dividing force.<sup>22</sup> André Laks stresses the necessity that characterises Empedocles’ cosmic and demonic cycles, whereas Catherine Osborne<sup>23</sup> supposes that Empedocles’ *daimones* act, to be sure, in a foreseen way, but not in a necessitated way, and this is why they can deserve punishment. She also supposes that for Empedocles the fall from the initial unity was determined by an action of prevarication in heaven. If this reconstruction were right, it would certainly present striking elements of correspondence with Origen, who knew Empedocles, just as Clement of Alexandria did.<sup>24</sup> Origen cites Empedocles as a philosopher and a poet thrice, in *CC* 1,32; 7,41; 8,53. Especially in the last passage, in which he also cites a line of this poet, Origen proves to be well acquainted with Empedocles’ doctrine of the incarnation and cycles of purification. Origen’s refutation follows. In the same way, Origen refuted the Stoic doctrine of *apokatas-*

<sup>21</sup> J.-B. Gourinat, “Éternel retour et temps périodique dans la philosophie stoïcienne,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 127 (2002) 213–227 admits that the Stoics were influenced by Heraclitus, as it was postulated by Nietzsche, but considers the doctrine of the “eternal return” to be primarily Stoic; he distinguishes Zeno’s doctrine from Chrysippus’s modified doctrine (his modifications aimed at attenuating its necessitarianism) and notes that some Stoics, such as Zeno of Tarsus and Diogenes of Babylon, and especially Boethius and Panaetius, did not profess that doctrine; Id., “L’éternel retour: Nietzsche et les Grecs,” in *Philosophie allemande et philosophie antique*, éd. M. Lequan, *Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg* 11 (2007) 125–144. On the Stoic doctrine of *apokatastasis* as presented by Dio Chrysostom see I. Ramelli, “Le origini della filosofia: greche o barbare? L’enigmatico mito del *Boristenitico* di Dione,” *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 99,2 (2007) 185–214.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. A.L. Pierris, ed., *The Empedoclean Kosmos*, I (Patras, 2005), especially the essays by D. Graham, “The Topology and Dynamics of Empedocles’ Cycle” (who defends D. O’Brien, *Empedocles’ Cosmic Cycle* [Cambridge, 1969]); O. Primavesi, “The Structure of Empedocles’ Cosmic Cycle,” who criticises O’Brien’s reconstruction in that it is grounded in an uncertain interpretation of Aristotle *Phys.* 8,1; see also Id., “Empedocle: il problema del ciclo cosmico e il papiro di Strasburgo,” *Elenchos* 19 (1998) 241–288; Id., *Empedokles Physika I: eine Rekonstruktion des zentralen Gedankenganges* (Berlin, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Both in Pierris, *The Empedoclean Kosmos*.

<sup>24</sup> Analysis of Clement’s knowledge of, and attitude towards, Empedocles in I. Ramelli, “Vie diverse all’unico mistero,” *Rendiconti dell’Istituto Lombardo, Accademia di Scienze e Lettere* 139 (2005) 455–483; *Empedocle*, eds. A. Tonelli–I. Ramelli (Milan, 2002).

tasis in order to make it clear that the *Christian* doctrine of apokatastasis is quite another thing. Stoic aeons are very different from those theorised by Origen, who overtly criticised Stoic apokatastasis on several occasions, e.g. in CC 4,12; 4,67–68; 5,20; *Princ.* 2,3. Two are the main differences between the Stoic theory of apokatastasis and Origen's Christian doctrine of apokatastasis:

- 1) the Stoics postulated an infinite series of aeons, while Origen posited an end of all aeons precisely at the eventual apokatastasis, which will be one and only one, absolutely eternal, and will put an end to every χρόνος and every αἰών;
- 2) the Stoics thought that in each aeon everything would happen in the very same way as in all the others, while Origen thought of the aeons as different from one another, in that they are the theatre of the moral and spiritual development of rational creatures.<sup>25</sup>

For example, in CC 4,12 and 67–68, Origen criticises the Stoic theory in that it denies human free will:

If this is the case, our *freedom of will* is over. For, if during given cycles, out of necessity, the same things have happened, happen, and will happen [...] it is clear that out of necessity Socrates will always devote himself to philosophy, and will be accused of introducing new divinities and of corrupting the youths; and that Anitus and Meletus will always be his accusers, and that the Areopagus judges will condemn him to death [...] If one accepts this idea, I do not quite know how *our freedom* will be saved and how *praises and blames* will possibly be justified. (CC 4,67–68)

In CC 5,20 the Stoic doctrine of cyclical worlds is also ascribed to Platonists and Pythagoreans; in *Princ.* 2,3,4 the Stoic notion of apokatastasis is again accused of denying human free will and responsibility:

I do not quite know what arguments can be adduced by those who maintain that the aeons follow each other being perfectly identical to one another. For, if one aeon will be perfectly identical to another, Adam and Eve will do for the second time the same things that they already did [...] Judas will betray the Lord again, and Paul will keep again the mantels of those who were stoning Stephen, and all that has happened in this life will happen again. But this theory can be supported by no argument, since the souls are pushed by their free will, and their progresses and regresses depend on the faculty of their will. Indeed, the souls are not induced to do or wish this or that by the circular

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<sup>25</sup> See my *Tempo ed eternità in età antica e patristica: tra greccità, ebraismo e cristianesimo* (forthcoming), introductory essay.

movement of the heavenly bodies that after many aeons accomplish the same cycle, but wherever the freedom of their inclination has pushed them, there they orient the course of their actions.

And in *Princ.* 2,3,5 the end of all aeons is affirmed, coinciding with apokatastasis, “when all will be no more in an aeon, but God will be ‘all in all.’” In 3,1 Origen already envisaged “a stage in which there will be no aeon any more,” just as in *Comm. in Io.* 13,3: after “αἰώνιος life,” which will be in the next aeon, in Christ, apokatastasis will come: then all will be in the Father and God will be “all in all.” Similarly, in *Sel. in Ps.* 60, after the sojourn in the aeons there comes the dwelling, not only in the Son, but also in the Father, indeed in the Holy Trinity, which is the eventual apokatastasis; this idea corresponds to what is expressed also in *Comm. in Io.* 10,39 and 3,10,3. In *Hom. in Ex.* 6,13, too, Origen foresees the end of aeons.<sup>26</sup>

### *The Roots of the Doctrine of Apokatastasis in the Bible*

Until the times of the comfort coming from the Lord's face will arrive [...]  
the times of universal restoration [χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων],  
of which God has spoken through his holy prophets from time immemorial.

(Acts 3:21)

Besides the philosophical use of the Stoics and the use of Philo, one of the main points of reference for Origen's and other Fathers' notion of apokatastasis is the Bible. It is necessary to investigate, then, the occurrences of ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι in the Bible, bearing in mind that for his doctrine of apokatastasis Origen drew inspiration from many other Biblical passages as well (*in primis* 1 Cor 15:24–28<sup>27</sup>), and not only those in which the key terms ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι appear. Thus, first I shall analyse the latter, and then the other main passages which could serve as a source of inspiration for the doctrine of apokatastasis—indeed, it must be also said that, thanks to his allegorical exegesis, Origen in fact drew inspiration from yet many other Scriptural passages.

<sup>26</sup> See analysis in my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, first Integrative Essay.

<sup>27</sup> And the exegesis that the Patristic authors would adopt was anticipated already by Paul himself in his Corinthian correspondence (M. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* [Cambridge, 2010]).

The main Patristic supporters of the apokatastasis theory, such as Bardaisan, Clement, Origen, Didymus, St. Anthony, St. Pamphilus Martyr, Methodius, St. Macrina, St. Gregory of Nyssa (and probably the two other Cappadocians), St. Evagrius Ponticus, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, St. John of Jerusalem, Rufinus, St. Jerome and St. Augustine (at least initially), Cassian, St. Isaac of Nineveh, St. John of Dalyatha, Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite, probably St. Maximus the Confessor, up to John the Scot Eriugena,<sup>28</sup> and many others, grounded their Christian doctrine of apokatastasis first of all in the Bible.

One of the most interesting passages is Matt 17:11, which is situated immediately after the Transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah had appeared as representatives of the Law and the Prophets respectively. Jesus is asked by his disciples whether Elijah will come before the Messiah at the end of times, as is prophesied in Mal 3:23.<sup>29</sup> He answers: "Elijah will indeed come, and ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα" (Matt 17:11).<sup>30</sup> The Vulgate renders: *Elias quidem venturus est, et restituet omnia*. Neither in Greek nor in Latin is it clear that Elijah performs this restoration. It is not Elijah who will restore all beings in the end, at Christ's return, but God. As a prophet, Elijah will announce, indicate, and prepare, but the restoration of all will be a work of God. The same ambiguity concerning the author of the eventual restoration of all is found in the synoptic parallel, Mark 9:12: "Elijah will come first, and ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα," or, in a variant reading, ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα. The Vulgate renders Mark 9:12 in the selfsame way as Matt 17:11: *restituet omnia*. In the case of Mark 9:12, too, it is not to be ruled out that the implied subject of the action of restoration is God: "Elijah will come first, and God will restore all beings."

Indeed, changes of subject in which the new subject is unexpressed, but is different from the preceding one, are very common in Matthew and Mark, whereas this does not occur in Luke, whose syntax and long sentences are totally different: Luke has almost no changes of subject with an unexpressed but different second subject in two contiguous and coordinated sentences,

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<sup>28</sup> I shall argue in the following chapters and sections that all of these supported the doctrine of apokatastasis.

<sup>29</sup> "I shall send Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord, to bring the father's heart to the son, and the heart of a human being to his neighbour, lest I come and destroy the earth completely." Cf. Sir 48:10, where it is also predicted that Elijah will come again "in the future times," the *καιροί*, the eschatological times.

<sup>30</sup> For a full philological analysis of this verse see I. Ramelli, "Matt 17:11: 'Elijah Will Come, and All Beings Will Be Restored.' Philological, Linguistic, Syntactical and Exegetical Arguments for a New Interpretation," *Maia* n.s. 61,1 (2009) 107–127.



and in John too such cases are rare.<sup>31</sup> A significant example of sudden variation of unexpressed subjects is Mark 9:13, which immediately follows the verse on Elijah and restoration (9:12): “Elijah came and (they) made of him what they wished.” Another example is in Matt 17:12, immediately after the passage on Elijah and universal apokatastasis: “Elijah has already come, and (they) did not recognise him.” The same may be the case with the sentence in Matt 17:18: “Elijah will indeed come, and (God) will restore all beings.”

What is more, in Matt 17:11 there existed, I suspect, a passive variant reading. Instead of ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα, some manuscripts (Bezae Cantabrigiensis), very ancient authors (Tatian and Hippolytus), and early translations (Vetus Syra, Peshitta, Vetus Latina) witness to a form ἀποκαταστήσαι πάντα. This should be an infinitive depending on the verb of movement: “Elijah will come for the restoration of all beings.” I suspect that there also existed a variant reading ἀποκαταστήσεται πάντα, a theological passive (or ἀποκατασταθήσεται πάντα, attested in Isa 23:17 and Ez 16:55, where also the verb is a theological passive): “Elijah will come, and all beings will be restored,” by God. This suspicion is confirmed by the ancient Syriac version called Harklean, a hyper-literal and accurate version from the Greek. Its *Vorlage* must have had precisely ἀποκαταστήσεται / ἀποκατασταθήσεται πάντα, a passive future, since it renders the verb “to restore” in a passive form:

ܡܝܬܠܐ ܡܕܚܝܐ ܕܡܠܬܐ ܢܗܝܬ ܡܕܠܐ

Elijah will indeed come first, and all beings / everything will be restored.

The Bohairic Coptic version translates: ܡܝܬܠܐ ܡܕܚܝܐ ܕܡܠܬܐ ܢܗܝܬ ܡܕܠܐ, “Elijah indeed is coming, and he will show you all beings.” The form ܡܕܠܐ derives from the verb ܡܠܐ, ܡܠܡܐ and means “to inform, instruct, indicate, show.” I suspect that the Greek *Vorlage* might have been ἀποκαλυφθήσεται, a variant reading that originated from ἀποκαταστήσεται, probably also thanks to an echo of Matt 10:26, where exactly ἀποκαλυφθήσεται is found. A clear trace of the passive variant is also to be found in the reading ܡܠܬܐ ܢܗܝܬ, “all beings, all things,” as an alternative to ܡܕܠܐ ܢܗܝܬ, in one part of the tradition (J<sup>3</sup>): while ܡܕܠܐ ܢܗܝܬ is an accusative, preceded by ܐ as a case marker, ܡܠܬܐ ܢܗܝܬ is a nominative, which points to a passive verb: “Elijah will indeed come, and all beings will be restored,” then corrupted into “will be revealed.” Thus, the Bohairic translation in a vestigial form, and the Syriac version more directly, attest to a passive variant reading

<sup>31</sup> Full demonstration in Ramelli, “Matt 17:11.”

ἀποκαταστήσεται, which allows for an understanding of Matt 17:11 as follows: “Elijah will indeed come, and all beings will be restored,” a theological passive. God is the agent of the eschatological universal restoration.

Another notable passage in the Bible in which the very terminology of ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι is employed is Acts 3:21, with the only occurrence of the noun ἀποκατάστασις in the whole Bible. Here, Peter, in his second speech in Jerusalem after Jesus’s resurrection, announces the eschatological times of universal restoration, apparently the same which is also announced in Matt 17:11:

until the times of the comfort [ἀνάψυξις] coming from the Lord’s face will arrive, and he sends Jesus Christ [...] the heavens will keep him till the times of universal restoration / of the apokatastasis of all beings [χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων], of which God has spoken through his holy prophets from time immemorial.<sup>32</sup>

The eventual universal restoration is parallel to the final ἀνάψυξις, the comfort or consolation and relief coming from God. It will come about when all have converted and their sins have been remitted (“Repent/convert, that your sins may be cancelled, and the times of consolation may come [...] the times of universal restoration,” Acts 3:19–20) and when God’s promise to Abraham can finally be fulfilled: “In your descendants all the families of the earth [παῖσιν αἱ πατριαὶ τῆς γῆς] will be blessed” (Acts 3:25).

In this passage, too, just as in Matt 17:11, the apokatastasis is eschatological, universal, and a work of God. The prophets foretold these eschatological times, for instance Isa 9:5–6 with the unending reign of the “angel of the great intention,” who announces God’s decision and will<sup>33</sup> (but see also, for

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<sup>32</sup> A. Méhat, “Apocatastase: Origène, Clément, Act 3.21,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 10 (1956) 196–214 interprets ἀποκατάστασις here in the sense of “accomplishment, fulfilment, realisation” (sc. of the promises of God), but contrast L. Misiarczyk, “Apokatastasis realizzata, attuale e futura nella tradizione patristica pre-origeniana,” *Augustinianum* 48 (2008) 33–58, *praes.* 36–41. In fact ἀποκατάστασις means a restoration to an original condition, of health or civic rights or beatitude etc., as the Vulgate captures very well in translating it *restitutio* in Acts 3:21. *Restitutio omnium* does not mean the fulfilment of God’s promises, but the restoration of all beings. See also below, three notes after, for a further argument coming from Origen’s definition of ἀποκατάστασις.

<sup>33</sup> According to Eusebius, an admirer of Origen, who connects this Isaiah passage to Acts 3:20–21, God’s great will is precisely the glorious plan of universal apokatastasis, which Peter says to have been announced by the prophets. In *Comm. in Is.* 1.85 Eusebius uses also 1 Cor 15:24–28 in describing apokatastasis, “the culmination of the goods,” foreseen by the prophets (Acts 3:20–21), the “ancient will/plan/intention” of God mentioned by Isaiah and established before creation, as the submission of all enemies and the destruction of evil and death, when God will be “all in all” at the end of all aeons.

example, Isa 11:6–8; 35; 55; 60, or Ez 37:1–14; 47:12, and Ps 28:30). Peter repeats this soon after, announcing the eventual restoration, in Acts 3:24: “all the prophets [...] foretold these days,” that is, those of the universal apokatastasis. In the immediate continuation of Peter’s speech, the fulfilment of this prophecy is linked to the accomplishment of the promise made to Abraham, the benediction of all families of the earth in his progeny. Now, this will be accomplished in the eschatological times as well, and will be an action of God. The same event is referred to in Ps 21:28–30, where it is prophesied that “all the families of the peoples” will adore God and “all the boundaries of the earth will (re)turn [ἐπιστραφήσονται] to the Lord.” The agent of this eschatological fact of the universal return to the Lord is, once more, God: “for the kingdom belongs to the Lord, and the Lord governs the people” (v. 29).

Remarkably, the Vulgate renders ἀποκατάστασις in Acts 3:21 by *restitutio*, i.e. precisely “restoration”:

cum venerint tempora refrigerii a conspectu Domini et miserit eum qui praedicatus est vobis Iesum Christum, quem oportet caelum quidem suscipere usque in tempora restitutionis omnium, quae locutus est Deus per os sanctorum suorum a saeculo prophetarum [...] et omnes prophetae [...] annuntiaverunt dies istos. Vos estis filii prophetarum et testamenti quod disposuit Deus [...] dicens ad Abraham: Et in semine tuo benedicentur omnes familiae terrae.

The eschatological restoration announced in Matt 17:11 and in Acts 3:21 has been interpreted in various ways by Patristic authors. The supporters of the eventual universal apokatastasis, as it was maintained for instance by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, of course saw in both passages a strong endorsement of their doctrine. Origen chose precisely the phrase ἀποκατάστασις πάντων (*restitutio omnium*) found in Acts 3:21 to indicate his doctrine. Indeed, in Rufinus’s version of his *De principiis*, we often find the notion of universal restoration referred to by means of *restitutio omnium*, the exact Latin translation of ἀποκατάστασις πάντων. Notably, it is the very same translation as the Vulgate offers for the Greek syntagm ἀποκατάστασις πάντων in Acts 3:21. In *Princ.* 2,3,5 Origen expressly refers to Acts 3:20 and interprets the ἀποκατάστασις πάντων of which Peter speaks as the “perfect *telos*” and the “perfecting of all” at the end of all aeons, when apokatastasis will take place:

quod erit forte in *restitutione omnium*, cum ad *perfectum finem* universa pervenient, id fortasse plus aliquid esse quam saeculum intellegendum est, in quo erit *omnium consummatio* [...] cum iam non in saeculo sunt omnia, sed omnia et in omnibus Deus.

This final phrase is a clear reference to 1 Cor 15:28, Origen's and Nyssen's favourite passage in support of the apokatastasis doctrine.<sup>34</sup> In *Princ.* 3,6,9 universal apokatastasis is seen as a long process of instruction:

in *consummatione et restitutione omnium* fieri putandum est ut paulatim proficientes [...] perveniant primo ad terram illam et eruditionem quae in ea est, qua ad meliora [...] instituta praeparentur.

The original Greek expression ἀποκατάστασις πάντων, which was translated here *restitutio omnium*, also occurs twice in Origen's extant Greek works. In *Hom. in Jer.* 14,18, he links Acts 3:21 to another Biblical passage in which the vocabulary of ἀποκατάστασις / ἀποκαθίστημι appears: "if you return / repent, I shall restore [ἀποκαταστήσω] you" (Jer 15:19). Origen offers here an interesting explanation of what ἀποκατάστασις means, explaining that it indicates a return to what is proper and original to someone (ἡ ἀποκατάστασις ἐστὶν εἰς τὰ οἰκεῖα). A person is not restored to anything but a condition that is original and natural to her.<sup>35</sup> Origen gives some examples: the therapeutic meaning, the reintegration of someone after an exile, and the reintegration of a soldier into the military unit from which he was chased. It is remarkable that all of these meanings are attested in the authors of the first century BCE and the first CE I have analysed, and, above all, that all of them can be applied metaphorically to apokatastasis in the Christian sense of universal restoration. Then, Origen relates the Jeremiah passage to Peter's reference (in Acts 3:21) to the universal restoration eventually operated by God:

If we return, God will restore [ἀποκαταστήσει] us: and, indeed, the end of this promise [τὸ τέλος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας] is the same as is written in the Acts of the Apostles, in the following passage: "until the times of the restoration of all beings [ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων], of which God spoke through his holy prophets from time immemorial," in Jesus Christ.

As is typical of Origen's thought,<sup>36</sup> the final apokatastasis announced by the prophets and then Peter is said to depend on Christ. Similarly, Origen

<sup>34</sup> See my "Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism. Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Biblical and Philosophical Basis of the Doctrine of Apokatastasis," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 313–356 and here below.

<sup>35</sup> This also confirms that in Acts 3:21 ἀποκατάστασις πάντων means "universal restoration" and not "the fulfilment of all" (sc. that God promised). See above, three notes before, the discussion of the article by Méhat, "Apocatastase."

<sup>36</sup> This is argued by I. Ramelli, "Origen and Apokatastasis: A Reassessment," in *Origeniana X*, eds. S. Kaczmarek–H. Pietras, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 244 (Leuven, 2011), 649–670. On Christ's soteriological role more generally see H. Crouzel, "Le Christ Sauveur selon Origène," *Studia missionalia* 30 (1981) 63–87.

interprets the ἀποκατάστασις πάντων in Acts 3:21 as a clear reference to the eventual universal restoration in *Comm. in Matth.* 17,19, where, in line with Paul, he remarks that now we do not see God as God is, but in the end we shall, and the end will be marked by apokatastasis:

But in the end [ἐπὶ τῷ τέλει τῶν πραγμάτων], at the accomplishment of “the restoration of all beings [ἀποκατάστασις πάντων], of which God spoke through his holy prophets from time immemorial,” we shall see God, not like now, when we see what God is not, but as it will become that state, when we shall see what God is.

The occurrences of ἀποκατάστασις in Origen in the extant Greek works are no less than thirty, including the two Greek passages I have just analysed, and they all indicate a return or restoration, mostly in a spiritual sense, whose main agent is always God. In *CC* 7,4 this term designates the return of a soul to God (ἀποκατάστασις πρὸς τὸν θεόν) thanks to virtue, which is said to be hindered by demons and of course favoured by God. In *Princ.* 3,2,15 Christ's actions of healing, as recounted in the Gospels, are interpreted spiritually, as a symbol of the healing or restoration of our spiritual sight (ἀποκατάστασις τῆς ὁράσεως), since God's Logos, i.e. Christ, creates knowledge in us human beings (cf. *Philoc.* 27,8 = *fr. in Ex.* PG 12,276,38: ἀποκατάστασις τῆς ὄψεως αὐτοῦ). Similarly, the safe return into the harbour (ἐπὶ τὸν λιμένα ἀποκατάστασις) in *Princ.* 3,1,19 is allegorised as the restoration of humans, which coincides with their salvation. The same equation between apokatastasis and salvation is found in *Comm. in Io.* 13,46,299: τὴν τῶν θεριζομένων σωτηρίαν καὶ ἀποκατάστασιν. *Ibid.* 1,16,91 ἀποκατάστασις explicitly refers to the eventual restoration of all, when there will be no enemy and no evil left, according to Paul's revelation in 1 Cor 15:24–28:<sup>37</sup> “The end [τὸ τέλος] will be at the so-called apokatastasis [ἐν τῇ λεγομένῃ ἀποκαταστάσει], in that no one, then, will be left an enemy [διὰ τὸ μηδένα καταλείπεσθαι τότε ἐχθρόν], if it is true that Christ must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, while the last enemy will be radically eliminated: death [ἔσχατος δὲ ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται, ὁ θάνατος].” I have already called attention to the fact that Origen himself defines it “the so-called apokatastasis,” thus indicating that he is taking this term from a tradition: not only Clement, who uses this word rather frequently in a spiritual sense,<sup>38</sup> but also the NT, and in particular precisely Acts 3:21. Here apokatastasis is said to have been announced by the prophets

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ramelli, “1 Cor 15:24–26.”

<sup>38</sup> See my “Origen, Bardaisan.”

of old, and in *Comm. in Io.* 10,42,291 Origen identifies these prophecies of a new paradise, a new Jerusalem rebuilt with precious stones (allegorised as the rational creatures<sup>39</sup>), a new Temple, and the return of the people of God from the exile (τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν τοῦ λαοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας) to their homeland, which all, on the spiritual plane, point to the eventual restoration, after the revolving of long periods of time (μακραῖς χρόνων περιόδοις).

This restoration is understood by Origen, just as by Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, as *anastasis* and *apokatastasis* together.<sup>40</sup> This is why in *Dial. Her.* 21 the restoration of the bones (ἀποκατάστασις τῶν ὀστέων) scattered in hell represents both the *anastasis* from death and the *apokatastasis* from evil, which is spiritual death (“in the land of sin, in the land of the dead, in the land of evilness”). In *Comm. in Matt.* 13,2,163 the universal *apokatastasis* (τὰ πάντα ἀποκαταστήσεται) is described as the dwelling of Christ in the saints: ἵνα ἀποκαταστᾶσι καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως γενομένοις χωρητικοῖς τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπιδημήσῃ ὁ ἐν δόξῃ ὀφθησόμενος υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ. The unity that characterises *apokatastasis* is underlined in another passage in which the very terminology of *apokatastasis* is prominent (*Comm. in Matt.* 15,24,21).<sup>41</sup> Universal *apokatastasis* (ἀποκατάστασις τοῦ παντός) will coincide with universal perfection, when all defects—allegorised as sins—have disappeared (*Sel. in Ps.* PG 12,1217,14). In *Comm. in Matt.* 17,15 Origen is interpreting the parable of the king who invited many to the wedding banquet of his son: this will be “the restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) of the church to Christ.” In the end, Christ will have back the Church; in the eschaton, this will coincide with the whole humanity, which was taken away at the beginning due to the fall.

Origen—followed by Eusebius—even speaks of the very *apokatastasis* of Christ, identified in *Fr. in Ps.* 119 with that of the church; this is Christ’s resurrection at the end of the aeons, when his body—that is, all of humanity—will be restored, according to a conception that will be taken up by Gregory

<sup>39</sup> This allegory is frequent in Origen and was facilitated by the double identification of the body of Christ both with the Temple and with rational creatures. See my “Clement’s Notion of the Logos ‘All Things as One,’” in *Alexandrian Personae: Scholarly Culture and Religious Traditions in Ancient Alexandria*, ed. Z. Pleše (Tübingen, 2013). See also, e.g., *Hom. in Luc.* 20: “I suspect that it is the Christian full of faith, and not the construction built by earthly labour as a type, to be the rational Temple of God, the living and true Temple.”

<sup>40</sup> For *apokatastasis* as a consequence of the *anastasis* in Origen see Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull’ anima*, Integrative Essay I; in Gregory and Maximus, see here below, Ch. 3, the section on Gregory Nyssen; Ch. 4, the section on the Confessor.

<sup>41</sup> In *Comm. in Matt.* 16,18,144 it is a matter of “a return to the holy things” or “beings,” εἰς τὰ ἅγια ἀποκατάστασις.

Nyssen in his *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*.<sup>42</sup> Christ himself is eagerly waiting for his own restoration, that is, the restoration of all humans, which constitute his “body.” This is why this restoration must be understood, not according to the *theologia*—since Christ, qua God, certainly needs no restoration—, but according to the *oikonomia*, that is, in reference to Christ’s incarnation, and not to his divinity: “in this sense, it does not surprise that he waits for *his own apokatastasis*” (*Sel. in Ps. 12*, 1168,32). But in the perfection of apokatastasis *theologia* and *oikonomia* will coincide: in the eventual restoration we shall finally see the divinity as it is, not, like now, as it is not, since we shall share in divine life, according to the notion of *theōsis* that will be crucial to Gregory Nyssen’s thought as well (*Schol. in Luc.* PG 17,364,55, with reference to the “universal restoration” in Acts 3:21; cf. *Comm. in Matt.* 17,19, also with reference to Acts 3:21).

Several other occurrences of *restitutio omnium*, the expression used in the Vulgate version of Acts 3:21 in reference to the eventual universal apokatastasis, are found in Rufinus and Jerome. The latter, at first, was an enthusiastic admirer of Origen, but then, unlike Rufinus, definitely rejected his teaching on the restoration of all, together with other Origenian views, and accused Rufinus of being an Origenist.<sup>43</sup> Rufinus, *Apol. c. Hier.* 1,10, reports his charge concerning universal restoration, including the devil and his demons:

Sed in eo te, inquit, arguo, quod Origenem interpretatus es, qui *restitutionem omnium* dicit futuram, in qua non solum omnes peccatores absolvendos esse, sed et ipsum diabolum et angelos eius quandoque dicit relaxandos esse de poenis, ut *restitutio omnium* consequenter possit intellegi.

And in 1,44 Rufinus reports Origen’s position: *Ita igitur et in restitutione omnium, quando corpus totius ecclesiae, nunc dispersum atque laceratum, verus medicus Iesus Christus sanaturus advenerit*. The very same words are found in Jerome, *Comm. in Eph.* 2,535,35, where both the noun *restitutio* and the verb *restituere* appear in reference to apokatastasis:

Ita igitur et in *restitutione omnium*, quando corpus totius ecclesiae nunc dispersum atque laceratum, verus medicus Christus Iesus sanaturus advenerit,

<sup>42</sup> See I. Ramelli, “The Trinitarian Theology of Gregory of Nyssa in his *In Illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*: His Polemic against ‘Arian’ Subordinationism and the Apokatastasis,” in *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism. Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Tübingen, 17–20 September 2008)*, ed. V.H. Drecoll–M. Berghaus, *Vigiliae Christianae Supplements*, 106 (Leiden, 2011), 445–478.

<sup>43</sup> See below, Ch. 3, the section on Jerome and Rufinus and the relevant subsections.

unusquisque secundum mensuram fidei et agnitionis filii Dei [...] suum recipiet locum, et incipiet id esse quod fuerat.

Indeed, Rufinus cited Jerome's words in order to make it clear that he formerly espoused the doctrine of universal restoration, and the very same passage is cited again by Jerome in turn, after Rufinus's quotation, in order to defend himself against the charge of former adhesion to Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis (which had meanwhile become controversial), in *Apol. adv. libr. Ruf.* 1,26,1. In *Apol.* 2,46,1 Rufinus shows that in his exegetical works Jerome once approved of Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis, which he now rejects: *De animae statu et de restitutione omnium, de diabolo atque angelis refugis eadem quae in illo culpat, ipse conscripserit*. In fact, in Jerome's commentaries, the eventual universal restoration (*restitutio*) frequently appears, at first to be approved of, then to be rejected. In *Comm. in Ez.* 11, 39,1957 Jerome declares that the end (the τέλος in Origen's words) of all beings will be their restoration to purity (*finis omnium restitutio puritatis sit*), that is, liberation from all evil. Likewise, in *Comm. in Os.* 1,4,10 he depicts the eventual restoration to the original condition, or to an even better one (*in pristinum vel in meliorem statum restitutio*), as the final universal purification and elimination of the sins of all (*in commune omnium peccata*). And in *Comm. in Eph.* 2,527,40 Jerome identifies the resurrection and universal restoration with God's promises: *nequaquam de repromissionibus ambigens, in resurrectione et restitutione omnium solida mente confidat*. But in *Comm. in Jon.* 3,146, after his change of mind, Jerome criticises the *restitutio omnium* for leveling, as it were, everyone:

si omnes rationabiles creaturae aequales sunt, et vel ex virtutibus vel ex vitiis sponte propria aut sursum eriguntur aut in ima merguntur, et longo post circuitu atque infinitis saeculis *omnium rerum restitutio* fiet, et una dignitas militantium, quae distantia erit inter virginem et prostibulum?

The same concept, with the same terminology of universal apokatastasis, is repeated in *Apol.* 2,12,2:

Probo ego inter multa Origenis mala haec maxime haeretica: [...] in *restitutione omnium*, quando indulgentia venerit principalis, cherubim et seraphim, thronos, principatus, dominationes, virtutes, potestates, archangelos, angelos, diabolium, daemones, animas omnium hominum, tam Christianorum quam Iudaeorum et gentilium, unius condicionis et mensurae fore; cumque ad formam et libram aequitatis pervenerint, et rationabiles creaturas, omni corporum faece deposita, novus de mundi exilio populi revertentis monstrarit exercitus, tunc rursus ex alio principio fieri mundum alium et alia corpora quibus labentes de caelo animae vestiantur, ut verendum nobis sit ne, qui nunc viri sumus, postea nascamur in feminas, et quae hodie virgo tunc forte prostibulum sit.



The very same idea, with the same examples and the selfsame terminology of *restitutio omnium*, appears in *Ep.* 84,7 (PL 55,129A).<sup>44</sup> Jerome is misrepresenting Origen's thought. In the latter's view, there will be a big difference between saints and sinners in the next life, and this will disappear only after the complete purification of all sinners. I shall return to this in the section on Jerome, at the end of Chapter 3. What is relevant to the present concern is the terminology of apokatastasis and the concept it indicates. In *Apol.* 1,6, Jerome criticises Rufinus for having changed Origen's supposedly impious Trinitarian doctrines into more acceptable ones in his translations, but having left unaltered Origen's teaching concerning the fall of angels and human souls and universal restoration, which Rufinus even emphasised by following Didymus's interpretation. In *Apol.* 2,15 Jerome ascribes the same doctrine of universal apokatastasis to St. Pamphilus, the author of the *Apolo-*gy for Origen, which Jerome in fact regards as entirely due to the "heretic" Eusebius:

dicit Eusebius, immo, ut tu vis, Pamphilus, in ipso volumine [...] animas hominum lapsas esse de caelo et in hoc quod sumus de angelis commutatas; in *restitutione omnium* aequales et angelos et daemones et homines fore.

Besides Matt 17:11, Mark 9:12, and Acts 3:21, which I have analysed so far, other occurrences of terms related to ἀποκατάστασις in the NT concern the verb ἀποκαθιστάνω / ἀποκαθίστημι: in four cases, in the Gospels, the subject of the action of restoring someone or a part of someone's body to health is Jesus, who heals illnesses: "the hand was restored [ἀπεκατεστάθη] healthy" by Jesus (Matt 12:13); "his hand was restored [ἀπεκατεστάθη]," *sc.* to health, "was cured," by Jesus (Mark 3:5); the blind man ἀπεκατέστη, "was restored" to sight, by Jesus (8:25), and "his hand was restored [ἀπεκατεστάθη]" to integrity and health, again by Jesus (Luke 6:10). Of course, the verb ἀποκαθίστημι in this therapeutic sense is well attested in Greek; in all of these cases, the Vulgate always has a passive form of the verb *restituere*, "to restore": Matt 12:13: *et restituta est sanitati*; Mark 3:5: *et restituta est manus illi* (Vetus Latina: *illius*); 8:25: *et restitutus est ita ut videret clare omnia*; and Luke 6:10: *et restituta est manus eius*.

These which I have cited from the Gospels are all examples of physical restoration, due to Jesus, who thus displays God's restoring and healing capacity. The physical component in the eschatological restoration, too, is

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<sup>44</sup> *Post multa saecula atque unam omnium restitutionem id ipsum fore Gabriel quod diabolum, Paulum quod Caiphan, virgines quod postribulas.*

well illustrated by Gregory of Nyssa, who, like Origen, sees the resurrection of the body, the *anastasis*, as the first stage of apokatastasis, which will involve the whole of the human being, body and soul. Indeed, the body, decomposed, will be restored to integrity, and the soul too will be restored (through purification) to its integrity, that is, to the original state in which it had not yet received evil. These two aspects, physical and spiritual, of the final restoration are so deeply intertwined for Gregory that he defines the resurrection itself as “the restoration of our nature to its original state,” ἡ ἀνάστασις ἐστὶν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἀποκατάστασις (*De an.* 148A).

In the rest of the NT the verb ἀποκαθίστημι / ἀποκαθιστάνω is attested in two other passages: in both cases the verb is again translated into Latin with a passive form of *restituo*,<sup>45</sup> and in both cases the author of the action of restoration is, once again, God. In Acts 1:6 it is God who is to restore the kingdom of Israel: the disciples ask the risen Jesus whether at that time he was going to restore the kingdom of Israel (ἀποκαθιστάνεις τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Ἰσραήλ;). Jesus in his reply makes it clear that this restoration is an eschatological event and will be carried out by God. Again, in Hebr 13:19 the subject of the action is God, and the object is the author of the epistle, who hopes to be restored, i.e. returned by God to the addressees: ἀποκατασταθῶ ὑμῖν. This notion is immediately reinforced by the subsequent sentence: God restored Jesus, “the great Shepherd of the sheep,” from death to life; all the more God will be able to restore the author to his addressees.

In the LXX, likewise, the one who restores (the verb is ἀποκαθίστημι / ἀποκαθιστάνω as well) is always God.<sup>46</sup> In particular, in Ex 14:26–27 it is God who restores the water, that is, makes the water flow again (after keeping it behind for the passage of the Israelites) and cover the Egyptians: “Let the water be restored [ἀποκαταστήτω] and let it cover the Egyptians [...] the water was restored [ἀπεκατέστη]” by God. In Hebrew the verb, in both verses, is *yšb*, meaning “to sit, to dwell, to settle,” and, especially in the *Hiqṭl* form, “to cause to dwell, to establish, constitute, reconstitute, restore.” In Lev 13:16 it is God who heals the leper’s skin, and the meaning of the verb is therapeutic (it will return in the Gospels, as I have shown): “if the skin is restored [ἀποκαταστῇ] to health” by God. It is no accident that the diagnosis and

<sup>45</sup> Acts 1:6: *Domine si in tempore hoc restitues regnum Israhel* (it is remarkable that the Vulgate uses a *future* tense, whereas in Greek there is a present); Hebr 13:19: *ut quo celerius restituar vobis*.

<sup>46</sup> When it is not necessarily God who restores, it is in trivial meanings of the verb such as the restitution of money, possessions, a position, an earthly kingdom, and the like (Gen 23:16; 29:3; 40:13 and 21; 41:13; 2 Kgs 9:7; 1 Esdr 1:29 and 33; 5:2; 6:25; 1 Macc 15:3; 2 Macc 12:25; 12:39).

therapy of leprosy depended on the priests, as the agents of God. In Hebrew, the verb is again a form of *yšb*. In Job 5:18 it is God who punishes and makes a person suffer, but then he restores him or her again: *πάλιν ἀποκαθίστησιν*, which Origen in his homilies on Jeremiah will consider a reference to apokatastasis and the end of suffering for sinners.<sup>47</sup> In Job 8:6 (which is identical to 22:28), it is God who will restore (*ἀποκαταστήσει*) the life of the suffering just; in Job 33:25 it is God who will restore (*ἀποκαταστήσει*) the suffering man, and his tormented flesh, to his youth. Likewise, in Ps 34:17 it is God who restores the soul of the anguished: “restore / save [*ἀποκατάστησον*] my soul / life from their evildoing.” The connection between restoration and salvation is particularly clear in this passage.

In Isa 23:17 it is God who restores Tyre to its old prosperity: *ἀποκαταστήσεται εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον*, “and it will be restored (by God) to its ancient state.” In Hebrew the verb comes again from *yšb*. The expression *ἀποκαθίστημι εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον* will become a technical phrase for the notion of apokatastasis in authors such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa; this expression highlights the idea that the restoration is a restoration to one’s original state. In Jer 15:19 it is God who will restore Israel if it will return to God: “if you return / repent [*ἐπιστρέψῃ*], I shall restore [*ἀποκαταστήσω*] you.” Origen, as I have shown, will interpret this verse, too, as a reference to apokatastasis. Both verbs in the sentence, however, in Hebrew derive from the same verb, *yšb*. In Jer 16:15; 23:8 and 27:19 it is again God who will restore Israel. In the first passage, “I shall restore [*ἀποκαταστήσω*] them to their land, which I gave to their forefathers,” in the Hebrew *Vorlage* the verb is again *yšb*. In the second passage, “The Lord is alive, who gathered the whole offspring of Israel [...] and restored [*ἀποκατέστησε*] them into their land,” in Hebrew the verb is once more *yšb*. The third passage reads, “and I shall restore [*ἀποκαταστήσω*] Israel into its meadow.”

In Ez 16:55 it is God who will restore Sodom and Samaria to their original condition before their destruction, and Jerusalem too: “and your sister Sodom and her daughters *will be restored* [*ἀποκατασταθήσονται*] (by Me) as they were at the beginning [*ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς*], and Samaria and her daughters will be restored [*ἀποκατασταθήσονται*] (by Me) as they were at the beginning [*ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς*], and you and your daughters *will be restored* [*ἀποκατασταθήσεσθε*] (by me) as you were at the beginning [*ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς*].” All three occurrences of the verb *ἀποκαθίστημι* in these two verses reflect the Hebrew verb *yšb*. In Dan

<sup>47</sup> See I. Ramelli, “Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah: Resurrection Announced throughout the Bible and its Twofold Conception,” *Augustinianum* 48 (2008) 59–78.

4:36 (A) it is God who restores Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom: after hearing a voice from heavens, "my kingdom was restored [ἀποκατεστάθη] to me (by God) and my glory was returned [ἀπεδόθη] to me (by God)." In Hos 2:5 it is God who will restore (ἀποκαταστήσω) Israel to the state of the day of its birth: "I shall *restore* her as she was in the day of her birth." In Tob BA 10:13, it is again God who will restore Tobit, i.e. will let him return safe home: "May the Lord of heaven bring you back safe [ἀποκαταστήσαι] home."

These Old-Testament occurrences of the verb ἀποκαθίστημι, which mostly correspond to the Hebrew *yšb*, to which they add the notion of return to an original state, are rendered into Latin not only by *restituo*, as the totality of occurrences in the NT, but also by a variety of verbs, depending on the meaning in each case. *Restituo* is used in the most important cases, those in which God's action of restoration is perceived as having a soteriological value, for instance in Ps 34:17: *restitu animam meam a malignitate eorum*; in Dan 4:33 Nebuchadnezzar says: *restitutus sum* (by God). But in Ez 16:55 the Vulgate translates, not with a passive form of *restituo*, but with *revertor*, an intransitive verb: *et soror tua Sodoma et filiae eius revertentur ad antiquitatem suam et Samaria et filiae eius revertentur ad antiquitatem suam, et tu et filiae tuae revertimini ad antiquitatem vestram*. In Jer 15:19 the sense of conversion is felt as preponderant, to the point that both ἐπιστρέφω and ἀποκαθίστημι are rendered by the same verb, *converto*: *si converteris convertam te*.<sup>48</sup> In the NT, instead, in the Vulgate all occurrences of the verb, both in its therapeutic meaning and in its eschatological sense of restoration, are systematically rendered by *restituo*, and in Acts 3:21 the corresponding noun, ἀποκατάστασις, is rendered by *restitutio*.

The verb ἀποκαθίστημι / ἀποκαθιστάνω, which in the LXX almost always translates the Hebrew verb *yšb* when it does not simply mean "to constitute," but "to reconstitute, to re-establish, to restore," and in the NT has quite a wide use, in Greek essentially means "to restore, re-establish, reconstitute,"

<sup>48</sup> In Ex 14:26–27, where the meaning is local and God makes the waters return back where they were, the verb is different: *extende manus tuas super mare ut revertantur aquae ad Aegyptios, cumque extendisset Moses manum contra mare reversum est primo diluculo ad priorem locum*. A local meaning is implied by ἀποκαθίστημι also in Jer 16:15, where the rendering is in fact *reducam eos ad terram suam*, and in 23:8: *adduxi semen domus Israel de terra aquilonis*. Likewise in Lev 13:16 the return of the leper's skin to a pale colour is designated in the following way: *quod si rursum versa fuerit in alborem*. In Job 5:18, given the therapeutic meaning of ἀποκαθίστημι, the Latin uses specific medical terms: *quia ipse vulnerat et medetur, percutit et manus eius sanabunt*. In Job 8:6 the verb is *reddere*, and the subject, as ever, is God: *pacatum reddet habitaculum iustitiae meae*, while in Job 33:25 an intransitive verb is used instead of a theological passive: *consumpta est caro eius a suppliciis revertatur ad dies adulescentiae suae*.

or, in the passive or intransitive forms, “to be restored,” in a variety of meanings that correspond to the meanings of ἀποκατάστασις that I have examined. For instance, it means “to restore” from exile or captivity, or in an astronomical sense (e.g. in Cleomedes 2,7) it refers to the return of heavenly bodies to the initial position after a whole revolution, or in a cosmological meaning (e.g. in Stoicism: SVF 2,190) it refers to the completion of a cosmic cycle, or else in a therapeutic sense it means “to restore to health,” or again in an economic sense it means “to pay, return what is due.” It can also mean “to restore” in reference to a philological emendation of a text; Origen, who was a Biblical philologist no less than a theologian–philosopher, uses ἀποκαθίστημι in this sense in *Comm. in Eph.* 3:17–19 and *Sel. in Ps.* 50 PG 12,1453B.

But the most specific and technical meaning of the verb is that concerning apokatastasis or eventual universal restoration, for instance again in Origen: “the impious and the demons will be restored [ἀποκατασταθήσονται] to their original order,” evidently by God (*Princ.* 2,10,8). In all the passages with ἀποκαθίστημι / ἀποκαθιστάνω that I have analysed, both in the OT and in the NT, the logical subject of the action of restoration and reintegration is God. In particular, in the closest conceptual parallel to Matt 17:11 (ἀποκαταστήσε[τα] πάντα), viz. Acts 3:20–21, it is very clear that the prophets foretold the universal restoration (ἀποκατάστασις πάντων) that will take place in the end, but it is God who will operate it. It is even probable that in both passages the eventual restoration also implies a sense of reconciliation between creatures and God, as is strongly suggested by Jer 15:19. Indeed, in the Midrash, too, an equation appears between restoration and reconciliation between humans and God: “Let not a man, after he has sinned, say: ‘There is no restoration for me,’ but let him trust in the Lord and repent, and God will receive him” (Midrash on Psalms 40,4).<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it is likely that in Matt 17:11 there was a passive variant reading, as the Syriac Harklean version attests with certainty and the Coptic version suggests: “Elijah will indeed come, and all beings will be restored” by God. But even if one prefers to cautiously stick to the attested active form, the close analysis I have offered strongly points to the understanding, “Elijah will indeed come, and God will restore all beings.” For both in the Bible and in Patristic authors who supported the doctrine of apokatastasis, it is always God who is the subject of the action of restoration, especially when it is understood in the spiritual and eschatological sense.

<sup>49</sup> C.G. Montefiore–H. Loewe, eds., *A Rabbinic Anthology* (London, 1938), 321. Cf. L. Newman, “The Quality of Mercy: On the Duty to Forgive in the Judaic Tradition,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 15,2 (1987) 155–172, *praes.* 163.

*Scriptural Sources of Inspiration without  
ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι, and the Value of αἰώνιος in the Bible*

In the OT (Hebrew Bible and Septuagint, but for Patristic authors especially the Septuagint) important elements that could inspire the doctrine of apokatastasis are found in Isaiah.<sup>50</sup> In Isa 42:1.3–4, the Servant of Jahweh, who is regularly interpreted by the Fathers in reference to Christ—Jesus applied Isaiah’s words to himself in Luke 4:16 ff.—, is said to be going to bring about justice for the nations. That this justice means salvation is clear from the mention of the sight given again to the blind and of the liberation of prisoners from darkness. In Isa 49:6 God wants “my salvation to reach the boundaries of the earth” and in Isa 51:4–5 the prophet announces the justification and salvation (δικαιοσύνη, σωτήριον) given by God as a gift so that the peoples will hope for God’s saving power, his “arm.” Thus, Isaiah foretells in 19:23–25 that even the Egyptians and the Assyrians—traditionally included among the worst idolaters—will adore God, and the latter will bless them together with Israel itself. In Isa 49:15 God promises never to abandon his people, in very emphatic terms: “Can a mother forget her own child and have no mercy on the little one she has given birth to? But even if a mother could ever do so, I shall not forget you.” Isa 66:18 proclaims that all nations and languages will see the glory of God; *all peoples*, and the remotest parts of the earth, will see the salvation (σωτήριον) brought about by God; this is why the Lord declares in Isa 66:23: “*all* will come and worship Me.” These expressions are strongly inclusive. Mal 4:2 (LXX 3:20), a passage that will be regularly interpreted by the Fathers—Origen *in primis*<sup>51</sup>—as a reference to Christ, joins the ideas of divine judgment and divine healing (“the Sun of Justice [ἥλιος δικαιοσύνης] will rise, with healing [ἰασις] on his wings,” Vulg. *oriatur [...]* *sol iustitiae, et sanitas in pinnis eius*).

In Ez 33:11 God declares under oath: “Because I live, I do not rejoice in the death of sinners, but I want them to *repent* and *live*.” Along the same lines, the restoration of Sodom and Samaria together with Jerusalem is announced in Ez 16:54–55, to the point that these—it is proclaimed—will be sister cities. The concept expressed in Isa 49:15 returns in Lam 3:22.31–33: “The

<sup>50</sup> For a different, larger list of “proclamations of hope” in the Bible, with 186 texts (related not to apokatastasis proper, but more generally to hope), see G. Beauchemin, *Hope Beyond Hell. The Righteous Purpose of God’s Judgment* (Olmito, TX 2010), 185–194; see also D. MacDonald [R. Parry], *The Evangelical Universalist* (Eugene, OR 2012), 35–131.

<sup>51</sup> See e.g. *dies Iesu vel dies iustorum [...]* *oriatur nobis Sol iustitiae* in *Hom. in Iud.* 1,1; *Sol iustitiae Christus* in *Comm. in Cant.* 2,4,25. Cf. *ibid.* 1,6,10: *quantum iniquitatis in nobis est, tantum longe simus a dilectione Christi*.

faithful love of the Lord *never ends*, his acts of mercy never have an end [...] the Lord will not reject forever. Even if he produces pains, he will have mercy, thanks to the abundance of his faithful love, because he does not want to afflict or sadden anyone.” I have already shown how the Septuagint translation of Jeremiah uses ἀποκαθίστημι in 15:19, in the promise that God will restore Israel if they return, which Origen interpreted in reference to the eventual apokatastasis.<sup>52</sup> The same notion is expressed in Sir 17:19.24: God “offers the return to those who repent [...] How great is the mercy of the Lord, his forgiveness to those who convert to him!” The option of repenting and being forgiven, offered by God’s mercy, is a recurrent theme in Wisdom (e.g., in 12:28.10.15–16.18–19 and 15:1). Likewise, Wis 11:23.26 emphasises God’s mercy, as implied by his omnipotence: “You have mercy upon all, because you can everything. You do not look at the sins of human beings, with a view to repentance [...] You spare all beings because all of them are yours, Lord, you who love life.”<sup>53</sup>

As for the NT, the points that could be interpreted as teaching an eternal damnation, and therefore contradicting the theory of apokatastasis, consist in the few passages that mention a πῦρ αἰώνιον, a κόλασις αἰώνιος, a fire “that cannot be quenched” and a worm that “does not die” (see, for instance, Matt 18:8–9; 25:41). Now, such expressions, rather than signifying an infinite duration, indicate that the fire, punishment, and worm at stake are not those of human everyday experience in this world, in which fire can be extinguished and worms die, but others, of the other world or αἰών. The adjective αἰώνιος in the Bible never means “eternal” unless it refers to God, who lends it the very notion of absolute eternity. In reference to life and death, it means “belonging to the future world.” It is remarkable that in the Bible only life in the other world is called αἰδιος, that is, “absolutely eternal”; this adjective in the Bible *never* refers to punishment, death, or fire in the other world. These are only called αἰώνια.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> In Jeremiah and Ezekiel ἀποκαθίστημι, too, occurs in a similar meaning; it is also used in Psalm 15:2 and 34:17; Job 5:18.

<sup>53</sup> See I. Ramelli, “La colpa antecedente come ermeneutica del male in sede storico-religiosa e nei testi biblici,” *Ricerche Storico-Bibliche* 19 (2007) 11–64.

<sup>54</sup> See I. Ramelli–D. Konstan, *Terms for Eternity* (Piscataway, 2007; new ed. 2011), 37–69, with the reviews by C. O’Brien in *The Classical Review* 60,2 (2010) 390–391; D. Ghira in *Maia* 61 (2009) 732–734; cf. Sh. Keough in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 84,4 (2008) 601; R. Parry in *Theological Scribbles* 14.02.2011 <http://theologicalscribbles.blogspot.com>; J. Post, “What Does Eternity in the Bible Mean?,” [www.hopebeyondhell.net/blog](http://www.hopebeyondhell.net/blog) 19.06.2010; D. Sie-laff, “Modern Recognition of Universal Salvation,” review article, *Association for Scriptural Knowledge* 8/10 (2010) 1–15.

Indeed, αἰώνιος occurs with impressive frequency in the LXX, together with αἰών; behind both is the Hebrew *‘olām*, which in turn had a variety of meanings and never indicated eternity unless in reference to God. The use of αἰών in the sense of a historically long epoch lies behind the occurrences of αἰώνιος in many cases, for instance the celebration that commemorates the exodus from Egypt (Ex 12:4.17). In Esther 4:1, God has chosen Israel as his “possession forever,” whereas the enemies of Israel and God will experience a “perennial shame” (Ps 77:66). In Isa 63:12 the sense of αἰώνιος relative to αἰών is understood as a time in the remote past or future, in accord with the original significance of *‘olām* in Hebrew: “he remembered days long past [αἰωνίων],” in the time of Moses. The sense of αἰώνιος, in these LXX occurrences, is that of something lasting over the centuries, or relating to remote antiquity, and not absolute eternity.<sup>55</sup> Only if employed in reference to God does αἰώνιος mean “eternal,” for instance in Gen 21:33, and this not for its intrinsic meaning, but for the characteristic of God.

Tobias 3:6, on the place of the afterlife as an “αἰώνιος place,” is the first passage in the LXX in which αἰώνιος unequivocally refers to the world to come (in Isa 33:14 it does not). In another late Biblical book, which comes closer to the time of the composition of the NT, 2 Macc 7:9, the doctrine of resurrection is affirmed and αἰώνιος is used with reference to life in the future world: “he will resurrect us into a resurrection of life in the world to come [ἀναβίωσιν αἰώνιον].” In 4 Macc 15:3 one finds, “saving into life in the world to come [αἰωνίαν ζωήν]”; in 4 Macc 9:9; 13:15, the evil are said to be doomed to suffer “in torment in the world to come [αἰωνίῳ].” This language will be picked up in NT references to “αἰώνιος life” and “αἰώνιον fire.” Αἰώνιος can assume a negative connotation in reference to this world or αἰών, for example in Job 22:15: “the path of this world [αἰώνιον], which evil men have trodden.”

Unlike αἰώνιος, αἰδῖος belongs to the philosophical lexicon and means “eternal” in the strict sense. It occurs only twice in the LXX, both times in late books written originally in Greek (Wisdom and 4 Maccabees). In Wisdom, which is saturated with the Greek philosophical lexicon, Wisdom is said to be “a reflection of the *eternal* [αἰδίου] light” that is God (7:26). We may also note that the expression τὸν αἰῶνα (accusative of duration of time) appears in this book in an absolute sense of “eternity,” under the influence of

<sup>55</sup> Besides Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, see also J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London, 1969), who also limits the contrast between the cyclical concept of time in classical Greek thought and the Biblical linear concept of time (143–151).



the Platonic connotation of αἰών. This is an exception in the Bible. Αἰώνιος in reference to the world to come is also found in 4 Macc 12:12, where an impious tyrant is threatened with fire in the next world (αἰωνίῳ πυρὶ) for the whole aeon to come, εἰς ὅλον τὸν αἰώνα. In the same book, very interestingly, in 4 Macc 10:15, the life of the pious martyrs is described as αἰδῖος, that is, eternal in the absolute sense. And this eternal blessed state is opposed to the destruction of the tyrant, the persecutor of the martyrs, in the world to come: τὸν αἰώνιον τοῦ τυράννου ὀλεθρον (ibid.). These parallel but antithetical expressions, βίος αἰδῖος and ὀλεθρος αἰώνιος, are particularly notable and inaugurate a distinction that will return again and again, not only in the NT, but also in many Fathers. Retributive punishment and destruction is described simply as αἰώνιος, that is, belonging to the αἰών to come, or “long,” but not strictly “eternal,” whereas otherworldly life, seen as a reward for the just, pious, and martyrs, is rather characterised as αἰδῖος, which means “eternal” proper. Αἰώνιος, on the contrary, bears the meaning “eternal” only when it refers to God and only thanks to the very notion of eternity regularly ascribed to God, for instance in 1 Tim 6:16, where it refers to God’s glory and power (see also 1 Pet 5:10–11; 2 Tim 2:10). Likewise, Christ is ζῶν αἰώνιος in the sense of “eternal life,” which is the life of God (1 John 1:2; see also 2:25).

Different uses of αἰών and αἰώνιος in Rom 16:25 especially warn against standard translations as “eternity” and “eternal.”<sup>56</sup> Here, the “revelation of the mystery concealed from time immemorial,” χρόνοις αἰωνίοις, obviously does not refer to “eternal times.” This mystery is said to have been now made manifest by the command of the eternal (αἰωνίου) God through Jesus Christ, who has glory “through the ages” (εἰς τοὺς αἰώνας), and not, of course, “through eternities.” Here, too, it is clear that only when it refers to God does αἰώνιος mean “eternal” in the proper sense. Similarly, at 2 Tim 1:9 grace is said to have been granted humans by God in Christ “before time immemorial,” πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων, certainly not “before eternal times.” In Rev 14:6, in a fully eschatological context, the αἰώνιον Gospel is the Gospel delivered directly by God in the world to come. Origen will make much of it, and later on Gioacchino da Fiore (1132 ca.–1202) will.<sup>57</sup> For him, who devoted one of his

<sup>56</sup> Beauchemin, *Hope Beyond Hell*, 28–29 endorses the analysis of αἰώνιος and αἰδῖος in the Bible carried out by Ramelli and Konstan in *Terms for Eternity*.

<sup>57</sup> After a pilgrimage in the Holy Land, where he converted, he returned to Italy and withdrew into a Cistercian abbey, devoting himself to Scriptural exegesis. He was created abbot, but asked the pope to be allowed to resign. In Calabria he founded the Cistercian abbey of Flora. He thought that humanity is progressing toward perfection, and based his

most important commentaries to Revelation, the αἰώνιον Gospel will belong to the Age of the Spirit, which will follow that of the Father, corresponding to that of the OT, and that of the Son, corresponding to the present era. The third will be an age of universal love, which will proceed from the Gospel of Christ, but it will transcend its letter and stick to its spiritual sense; then there will be no need for disciplinary institutions; the Greek and Latin churches will be united and the Jews converted. In that contemplative and monastic age the meaning of the whole Bible will be fully revealed.<sup>58</sup> This is not a dream of human self-realisation: Gioacchino regarded God as the sole guarantor that humanity, in the end, will reach perfection in its totality; it is God who will destroy the Antichrist.<sup>59</sup>

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ideas on Revelation, St. Paul, and monasticism. See M. Riedl, *Joachim von Fiore* (Würzburg, 2004); cf. H. Grundmann, *Studien über Joachim von Fiore* (Stuttgart, 1966). His main works are: *Concordia novi et veteris Testamenti, Expositio in Apocalypsim, Psalterium decem chordarum, Tractatus super Evangelia*, and *De articulis Fidei*. In his *Genealogia* (ed. G.L. Potestà, *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 56/1 [2000]) he clarified that with Christ the time of the church has come. The church is not *triumphans* in this world, but in the other, so that Gioacchino's hopes were in the heavenly Jerusalem, an idea that returns in *Intelligentia super calathis*. The church's failure in the world is due to its becoming involved in the world, beginning with the "donation of Constantine." See J.E. Wannenmacher, *Hermeneutik der Heilsgeschichte* (Leiden, 2005). His *Psalterium* focuses on the reformation of the Benedictine order. See *Gioacchino da Fiore tra Bernardo di Clairvaux e Innocenzo III*, ed. R. Rusconi (Viella, 2001); S.E. Wessley, *Joachim of Fiore and Monastic Reform* (New York, 1990). In *Liber Concordiae*, he expounded his ideas on the reformation of the church and how to lead people to the future life. In *Dispositio novi ordinis* he describes his ideal society and the order of monastic communities.

<sup>58</sup> See R.E. Lerner, "Antichrists and Antichrist in Joachim of Fiore," *Speculum* 60 (1985) 553–570; "Joachim of Fiore as a Link between St. Bernard and Innocent III on the Figural Significance of Melchisedech," *Mediaeval Studies* 42 (1980) 471–476; M. Reeves–W. Gould, *Gioacchino da Fiore e il mito dell'Evangelo eterno* (Oxford, 1987; new ed. Rome, 2000), also on the misunderstandings of Gioacchino's theory until the last century; B. Töpfer, *Das kommende Reich des Friedens* (Berlin, 1964).

<sup>59</sup> In *Dialogi de prescientia Dei et predestinatione electorum* (ed. G.L. Potestà, Rome, 1995), he reflects on the relationship between the grace of God and human free will, commenting on Rom 9:11–23 on the divine election of Jacob: the smallest are the recipients of God's mercy, because they have humility, which is the foundation of all virtues. In *Psalterium decem chordarum*, his main work of Trinitarian theology (1184/87; last revised in 1201), he presents the Trinity in the figure of David's psalter and studies the perfect number of 150 Psalms; he describes the progress of the knowledge of God in three stages of history, and recommends the private practice of psalmody as a way to salvation. The doctrines of his radical followers, opposed to the church, were condemned in 1256, but they were not Gioacchino's own; even spurious works circulated under his name. Now, with the edition of the authentic works (see *Gioacchino da Fiore nella cultura contemporanea*, ed. G.L. Potestà, Rome, 2005), scholarship has come to a scientific assessment.

The use of αἰώνιος in reference to life in the world to come is particularly frequent, especially in the formula ζωὴ αἰώνιος, for example in Matt 19:16, Mark 10:17, Luke 18:18, 10:25; Matt 19:29. In Heb 9:15, a parallel expression is found: τῆς αἰωνίου κληρονομίας, “the inheritance of the world to come.” That ζωὴ αἰώνιος is life in the αἰών to come, as opposed to the present short time or καιρός, is clear in Mark 10:30, where the followers of Christ are promised goods a hundredfold in the present time, “and in the aeon to come [ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ ἐρχομένῳ] a future life [ζωὴν αἰώνιον].” This αἰώνιος life is the one that will obtain *in saeculo futuro*, as the Vulgate translates. The same phrase occurs in Luke 18:30 as well, and in Tit 1:1–2, where Ps. Paul, at the beginning of the letter, presents himself as serving God and Christ “in hopes of attaining life in the world to come [ζωῆς αἰωνίου], which God, who does not lie, announced from before times immemorial [πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων], and has made manifest his Logos on particular occasions [καιροῖς].” The καιρός is the precise historical time in which the eternal Logos is revealed, whereas “times” immemorial (αἰώνιοι) represent the succession of ages or aeons, looking back presumably to the times of the prophets when God announced life αἰώνιος, in the aeon to come (see Acts 3:21). The Latin translator, who usually translates αἰώνιος by *aeternus*, *sempiternus*, or *aeternalis*, here cannot do so, given that a rendering such as “eternal times” would be absurd; therefore, he opts for *saecularis*, that is, “of the ages or aeons” (*tempora saecularia*). Equally telling is the terminology adopted in John 4:14. Jesus here affirms: “whoever drinks the water I give him or her, will not be thirsty in the aeon to come [εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα],” but it will suffice “for life in that aeon [εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον].” In the Gospel of John, the expression ζωὴ αἰώνιος is used in contexts that are often different from those of the Synoptics, but it always can be taken as referring to life in the future aeon, for instance in 3:15–16, where believers in Christ are said to have ζωὴν αἰώνιον, “life in the aeon to come,” because Christ came to save the world (κόσμος); in John 5:24, those who hear Christ’s words are said to have life in the world to come (ζωὴν αἰώνιον); they will pass “from death to life” and “live.” Life that continues into the world to come may be found expressed simply as “life,” in John and elsewhere.<sup>60</sup> In John 6:47, it is guaranteed that the faithful have life αἰώνιος in that Jesus is the bread of life and “the living bread,” and those who eat it will “continue to live into the future aeon [εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] [...] beyond the life of this world [ὑπὲρ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ κόσμου],” or “for the sake of the life of the world.” The same contrast is found in John 12:25: “whoever loves his life

<sup>60</sup> E.g., John 5:39, 3:36, 5:24 ff. and 39; Matt 19:16–17; 1 Tim 6:12 and 19.

will lose it, but whoever hates it in this world [ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ] will save it for life in the other world [εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον].” The reference to the future aeon is especially clear in 13:48, τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

In Paul, too, occurrences of αἰώνιος are often connected with life in the next world. In Rom 2:7–9 God’s future judgment is said to grant ζωὴν αἰώνιον to those who do good, but anger and contempt, without any further specification, to the unjust. Grace is said to overcome sin and reign into the world to come (εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον) through Jesus in Rom 5:20–21. In Tit 3:6–7, the believers, rendered just by Christ’s grace, are said to become inheritors of life in the world to come, τῆς ζωῆς αἰωνίου. Paul insists that life in the next world is our τέλος, achieved by grace (Rom 6:22–23); in Gal 6:8 ζωὴν αἰώνιον depends again on a future verb. In the letters of John, where the definition of God as ἀγάπη is famously found, ζωὴ αἰώνιος is closely linked with love: “we pass from death to life because we love our brothers,” and those who hate their brothers do not have ζωὴν αἰώνιον (1John 3:15; cf. Jud 21:3). According to John, life in the aeon to come is also associated with faith: to those who believe, God has given ζωὴν αἰώνιον, and this life is in his Son: “those who have the Son have that life, and those who do not have the Son of God do not have that life. These are the things I have written, so that you may know that you have life granted in the world to come [ζωὴν αἰώνιον]” (1John 5:11–13; cf. 5:20: αἰώνιος life is the true God; also John 6:68: ῥήματα ζωῆς αἰωνίου).

Paul uses other expressions as well that include the adjective αἰώνιος, always in connection with life in the αἰών to come. In 2 Cor 4:17–18, he states that, in exchange for light tribulations in the present, there will be a “weight of glory in the world to come”; indeed, he insists that what is visible pertains to the present (πρόσκαιρα), but what is invisible belongs to the world to come (αἰώνια). Similarly, in 2 Cor 5:1–3, the promise is made of “a house in the next world [οἰκίαν αἰώνιον], not made by human hand, in heaven.” Its being in heaven locates it in the αἰών. Likewise, the αἰώνιαι σκηναί mentioned in Luke 16:9 are tents or abodes in the next world. In 2 Thess 2:16, παράκλησιν αἰωνίαν is not an “eternal encouragement,” but an “encouragement for the world to come.” In Heb 6:2, the unknown author speaks of “the resurrection of the dead and the judgment that will take place in the next world [κρίματος αἰωνίου].” This means that the resurrection and the judgment will take place in the αἰών, in the future world, and not that they will be eternal, since both are processes that are limited in time, and will not go on for eternity. They are designated as αἰώνια because both processes will take place in the next αἰών. It must be stressed in this connection that, indeed, in the NT, just as in the LXX, αἰών can also refer to the present world, but in this case it always has

a modifier, such as “this αἰών,” “the present αἰών,” etc., for instance in 1 Tim 6:17, “those who are rich ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι, in the present world.” If there is no modifier, this world is indicated by κόσμος.

In Mark 3:29, Jesus proclaims that sins and blasphemies toward human beings will be remitted, but those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit do not have forgiveness granted in the world to come (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα), but remain guilty of a sin that is αἰώνιος, that is, a sin which endures in the coming αἰών. In the NT, the πῦρ αἰώνιον, the fire of punishment in the next world, is mentioned several times, but there is no trace of πῦρ αἰδίων. The Vulgate regularly translates πῦρ αἰώνιον with *ignis aeternus*, thus suggesting a meaning “eternal fire,” but this would rather be the correct translation of πῦρ αἰδίων. Thus, in Matt 18:8, Jesus says it is better to enter into the (future) life without a limb than to preserve all of one’s limbs and be thrust into the fire in the world to come (τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον), paraphrased in the next verse as “the Gehenna of fire.” In Matt 25:41, punishment in the world to come (κόλασιν αἰώνιον) for the wicked is contrasted with life in the world to come (ζωὴν αἰώνιον) for the just.

In the NT, punishment in the world to come not only is described exclusively as αἰώνιος and never as αἰδίων, but it is invariably indicated by κόλασις, and never by τιμωρία. Now, according to Aristotle, κόλασις “is inflicted in the interest of the sufferer,” whereas τιμωρία is inflicted “in the interest of him who inflicts it, that he may obtain satisfaction” (*Rhet.* 1369b13). The same was already indicated by Plato in *Gorg.* 476A–477A, in which κόλασις, provided that it is just, is described as good for the person who is chastised, in that he becomes better. In the NT the punishment of sinners in the world to come is therefore understood to be inflicted in their interest, which implies that it is purifying rather than retributive. If this is the case, it should be supposed that it will come to an end once it has achieved its function; this is indeed consistent with its constant designation as αἰώνιος, and never as αἰδίων. In Jude 7, the fire that consumed Sodom is declared to be an example of the πῦρ αἰώνιον, that is, the fire in the world to come. This cannot mean “eternal fire,” given that the fire that consumed Sodom and Gomorrah did not burn eternally, but it lasted only very little. The point is that it was not the fire of this world; rather, it was that of the other world, sent by God to destroy evil. This seems also to be the specific function of the fire in the next world, the πῦρ αἰώνιον that is announced in many passages of the NT.

The more strictly philosophical term αἰδίων in the NT never refers to punishment of human beings, death, or fire. It rather refers either to God, who is eternal in the absolute sense, or to the imprisonment of the wicked angels, who are eternal creatures (at least *a parte post*). In Rom 1:20, αἰδίων refers to

the power and divinity of God. It is certain that Paul was familiar with Greek philosophical terminology.<sup>61</sup> In Jude 6, ἄιδιος refers to the imprisonment of evil angels, who are bound in darkness “with eternal chains [δεσμοῖς αἰδίοις] until the judgment of the great day.” These chains of the fallen angels are called αἰδία probably because angels themselves are eternal, even though not in the same way as God is, since God alone is uncreated. It is unclear in this passage whether the fall of these angels is thought to have occurred at the beginning of this world, or even before it,<sup>62</sup> but in either case the term αἰδία seems to indicate an uninterrupted continuity beyond the ages and the succession of aeons. This is not the case with human beings, who do not live through the entire duration of the present universe, but in single generations or αἰῶνες. The misunderstanding of αἰώνιος as “eternal” was facilitated by Latin translations of both αἰώνιος and ἄιδιος with *aeternus*. This blurred the difference between these two crucial Greek terms and certainly played a role in the rejection of the doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>63</sup>

That the eschatological fire in the NT is thought as purifying—which represents one of the main premises for the doctrine of apokatastasis—is also suggested by Mark 9:49. Indeed, after the mention of the eschatological worm and fire deriving from Isa 66:24 and present both in Mark 9:48 and in Matt 18:8–9, such fire is described as purificatory in Mark 9:49, in that it performs the task of salt; all will be purified by this fire. Origen was probably inspired by this passage when he claimed that all will pass through the otherworldly fire, including Paul and Peter. Another significant passage is Matt 19:25, in which the disciples interrogate Jesus precisely regarding the possibility of being saved, given the moral standards that he has set. His reply is the following: “Impossible for humans, but everything is possible for God.” God saves even in case this seems impossible for human beings. Even when, on human standards, it would seem impossible to reconcile justice and mercy, this is possible for God. This argument from God’s omnipotence will

<sup>61</sup> See at least I. Ramelli, “Philosophen und Prediger: Dion und Paulus—pagane und christliche weise Männer,” in *Dion von Prusa. Der Philosoph und sein Bild*, eing., übers., und mit interpr. Essays versehen von H.-G. Nesselrath–S. Fornaro–E. Amato–B. Borg–I. Ramelli–J. Schamp–R. Burri (Tübingen, 2009), 183–210; Ead., “The Use of XAPA in the New Testament and its Background in Hellenistic Moral Philosophy,” in collaboration with D. Konstan, *Exemplaria Classica* 14 (2010) 185–204.

<sup>62</sup> D.B. Martin, “When Did Angels Become Demons?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129 (2010) 657–677, shows very well that in the Hebrew Bible, the LXX and the NT demons are not yet identified with fallen angels. Unfortunately, he does not offer a complete analysis of the NT and does not take into consideration Jude 6.

<sup>63</sup> See below, Ch. 4, the section on Augustine.

be used in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis by Origen (in a reasoning that aims at correcting Plato on this point) and by Julian of Norwich, or more exactly by Jesus in a revelation to this Mediaeval female mystic.<sup>64</sup>

Another meaningful passage is Matt 5:43–47, in which it is proclaimed that God has the sun shine over both the just and the wicked and invites people to love and forgive their enemies, setting himself as an example of this behaviour. In Luke 16:16 Jesus proclaims that, after John the Baptist, “the good news of the Kingdom of God is announced, and everyone is *compelled* to enter it.”<sup>65</sup> As for the gospel and letters of John, the salvific work of Christ is emphasised, sometimes in universalistic tones. Christ eliminates the sins of the world (John 1:29); out of love, God sent him to save the world, rather than to condemn it (John 3:17; 12:47; 1 John 4:14). His death is the sacrifice that redeems (ἱλασμός) the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2; 4:10). The following declaration of Jesus in John 12:31–32 is also meaningful: “Now the governor of this world [*sc.* the devil] is being thrown out, and I myself, when I am lifted up from the earth, shall draw *all people* [πάντας] to myself.” Shortly after, in the great priestly prayer embedded in his farewell discourse, Jesus asks the Father to glorify him, “that the Son may glorify you, because you have handed him *every human being*, that he may give eternal life to *every being you have handed him*. Now, eternal life is that they may know you” (John 17:1–2). If Christ gives eternal life to every being the Father has entrusted him with, and if the Father has entrusted him with all humans, it follows that Christ will give eternal life to all humans. The sentence, “eternal life is that they may know you” corresponds to 1 Tim 2:4–6: “God wants *all humans* to be saved and attain the *knowledge* of Truth,” that is, God. Jesus in John 11:24–26 presents himself as the resurrection and Life in an absolute sense and adds that all those who believe in him will continue to live after death and “will definitely not die in the world to come [οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα].” The reference here is not simply to the resurrection of the body. Many passages in John indicate that life continuing in the world to come, αἰώνιος life, is Christ. Another telling Johannine declaration is the definition of God as ἀγάπη in 1 John 4:8.16. In John 16:8–11, the Spirit-Paracletus “will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin,

<sup>64</sup> For Origen see below in this chapter, the section on Origen; for Julian see below the conclusions at the end of Ch. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Argument for this translation is found in I. Ramelli, “Luke 16:16: The Good News of the Kingdom Is Proclaimed and Everyone Is Forced into It,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008) 747–768.

because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged" (RSV). Here κόσμος is usually interpreted as "unbelievers," but Riku Tuppurainen suggests that it is "all people of the world as the theatre of salvation history."<sup>66</sup>

I have already discussed the announcement of universal apokatastasis in Acts 3:20–21, which should probably be set in the framework of Jewish eschatological expectations attested between 200 BCE and 30 CE. These were related to the coming of the Messiah and the restoration of Israel<sup>67</sup> and often also entailed the turning of the "nations" to the God of Israel (e.g. Tobit 14:6; 1 Enoch 91:14) and the remission of sins.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, in Acts 3:20–21

<sup>66</sup> R. Tuppurainen, "All the World or Not Quite: Kosmos in John 16:8," *Journal of Early Christian History* n.s. 1 (2011) 165–184.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. M. Sleeman, *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts* (Cambridge/New York, 2009), esp. Ch. 3; on the ascension in Acts see also M. Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context* (Sheffield, 1987). On the expectation of the restoration of Israel in Jesus's circle see M.F. Bird, *Are You the One Who Is to Come? The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2009); cf. the following footnote as well. The "restoration of Israel" is foreseen in Ez 37 according to G. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), 31.

<sup>68</sup> See e.g. B. Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Tübingen, 2005); cf. S.M. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgment and Restoration* (Cambridge, 2002); J.P. Ware, *The Mission of the Church in Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (Leiden, 2005), who shows that in Judaism in Jesus's day the eschatological conversion of the gentiles was foreseen; F. Philip, *The Origins of Pauline Pneumatology: The Eschatological Bestowal of the Spirit upon Gentiles in Judaism and the Early Development of Paul's Theology* (Tübingen, 2005), who shows that the descent of the Spirit upon the pagans was expected for the end of times; M.E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-Gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts* (Berlin, 2006); G. Holtz, *Damit Gott sei alles in allem* (Berlin, 2007), on Jewish and Pauline universalism; T.L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles* (Waco, 2007), who shows the Jewish openness to the eschatological participation of the pagans in the benefits granted to Israel, up to 135 CE; J.A. Dennis, *Jesus' Death and the Gathering of True Israel: The Johannine Appropriation of Restoration Theology in the Light of John 11:47–52* (Tübingen, 2007). There are many OT texts that represent the end of the exile as a restoration of the tribes of Israel. K.L. Anderson, "But God Raised Him from the Dead" (Milton Keynes, 2006), ch. 7, interprets ἀποκατάστασις πάντων in Acts 3:21 as the universal apokatastasis of Israel, a part of God's salvific plan for all humanity according to Luke (13; 47). R.J. Morales, *The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel* (Tübingen, 2010) studies the expectations of the restoration of Israel in Second Temple Judaism as the background for the NT, especially Galatians. According to P. Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations," *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010) 232–252, and *Sin: The Early History of an Idea* (Princeton, 2012), 27–28, Paul did not want the gentile to be circumcised, to preserve the distinctiveness of the Jews, and to include the nations in Jewish restoration eschatology and in redemption. In Jewish restoration eschatology, the nations would be saved in that they would eventually recognise and worship God, but they would not become Jew "according to the flesh." Cf. Ead., "From Jesus to Christ," in *Jews and Gentiles*



Peter is addressing a speech to the Jews of Jerusalem, when he announces the times of universal restoration, and the reference back is to Acts 1:6, in which the disciples, after Jesus's resurrection, ask him when he will "restore the kingdom to Israel." Both passages must be read in the framework of the Jewish expectations of an eschatological restoration. Peter's speech in Acts 3 is of course a work by Luke, or at any rate the author of Acts, but, in addition to this Petrine discourse, four other documents equally belonging to the Petrine tradition support the expectation of a universal restoration: the announcement of Christ's descent to hell in 1 Peter and in the Gospel of Peter,<sup>69</sup> and the foretelling of the eventual salvation of the damned in the *Apocalypse of Peter* and in the Ps. Clementine account that constitutes the frame of the Ethiopian *Apocalypse of Peter*.<sup>70</sup> This, and especially Acts 1:6 and 3:20–21, suggests Jewish-Christian roots of the doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>71</sup>

In this connection, it is also interesting to mention a passage of the Enochic *Book of Parables* (30 BCE–70 CE ca.) which, at least on Chialà's interpretation,<sup>72</sup> points to the salvation of all humans. Here, the Just, Elect, and

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*Speak of Jesus*, ed. A. Zannoni (Minneapolis, 1994), 77–91, *praes.* 83–86; M.V. Novenson, "The Jewish Messiahs, the Pauline Christ, and the Gentile Question," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009) 357–373, who argues that for Paul the Gentiles will be neither converted nor destroyed, but will share in the blessedness of the age to come by obeying the Davidic king of Israel. A.L.A. Hogeterp, *Expectations of the End* (Leiden, 2009) offers a comparative study of eschatological, apocalyptic, and messianic ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the NT, challenging dichotomies between realised and futuristic eschatology, and wisdom and apocalypticism.

<sup>69</sup> On which see at least E. Norelli, "Situation des apocryphes pétriniens," *Apocrypha* 2 (1991) 31–83, and *Das Evangelium nach Petrus*, eds. Th.J. Kraus–T. Nicklas (Berlin, 2007). T.P. Henderson, *The Gospel of Peter and Early Christian Apologetics* (Tübingen, 2011) thinks that it was composed by reworking materials from the Gospels that eventually entered the NT.

<sup>70</sup> See below for these texts. On the Petrine tradition see my "The Birth of the Rome-Alexandria Connection: The Early Sources on Mark and Philo, and the Petrine Tradition," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 23 (2011) 69–95.

<sup>71</sup> On "Jewish Christianity" see at least J. Daniélou, *Théologie du judéo-christianisme* (Tournai, 1958); S.C. Mimouni, *Le judéo-christianisme ancien* (Paris, 1998); *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, eds. O. Skarsaune–R. Hvalvik (Peabody, 2007); also D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partitions of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, 2004); D. Frankfurter, "Beyond 'Jewish Christianity,'" in *The Ways That Never Parted*, eds. A. Becker–A. Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis, 2007), 131–143; and (but limited to Revelation) P.L. Mayo, *Those Who Call Themselves Jews* (Eugene, OR, 2006).

<sup>72</sup> S. Chialà, *Libro delle parabole di Enoc*, text and commentary (Brescia, 1997); for the presence of 1 Enoch in Jewish and Christian literature see A.Y. Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge, 2005). Also on 1 Enoch, the Watchers' responsibility for evil, and the role of Noah as new Adam M.E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism* (Grand Rapids, 2011), 31–58.

Son of the Human Being, created by God before any time, and superior to the angels, will perform the eschatological judgment and forgive all those who will acknowledge their sins. The only ones who will not be forgiven are “the powerful of the earth.” If these, as Chialà surmises, are the demons—since in the NT the devil is described as “the ruler/prince of this world,” and the demons are the δυνάμεις that govern the world, the ἄρχοντες τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ-του defeated by Jesus—, this indicates that only demons will be condemned in the end. Humans, on this interpretation, will be ultimately saved.

4 Ezra is not an overtly universalistic text.<sup>73</sup> However, in it Uriel announces that there will come a time when a good seed instead of the bad will be sown, and hell will be forced to release its prisoners: *in inferno promptuaria animarum matrici adsimilata sunt. Quemadmodum enim festinabit quae parit effugere necessitatem partus, sic et haec festinat reddere ea quae commenda-ta sunt ab initio. Tunc tibi demonstrabitur de his quae concupiscis videre* (4,40–43). In Ch. 5 God says to Ezra that he will be unable to discover God’s hidden ways, but assures that God’s intention is salvific: *non poteris invenire iudicium meum aut finem caritatis quem pro populo meo promisi* (5,40). Thus, in Ch. 6, the eschatological time of salvation is described, when evil will be eliminated: *Omnis qui derelictus fuerit ex omnibus istis quibus praedixi tibi, ipse salvabitur et videbit salutare meum et finem saeculi mei [...] mutabitur cor inhabitantium et convertetur in sensum alium. Delebitur enim malum et extinguetur dolus [...] Florebit autem fides et vincetur corruptela, et ostendebitur veritas* (6,25–28). Evil will disappear because human hearts will be changed by God.

<sup>73</sup> E.g. M.E. Stone, “The Concept of the Messiah in 4 Ezra,” in J. Neusner (ed.), *Religions in Antiquity* (Leiden, 1968) 295–312; U. Luck, “Das Weltverständnis in der jüdischen Apokalyptik dargestellt am äthiopischen Henoch und am 4. Esra,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 73 (1976) 283–305; A.L. Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil in the Theodicy of 4 Ezra* (Missoula, 1977); E. Brandenburger, *Die Verborgenheit Gottes im Weltgeschehen* (Zürich, 1981); J. Schreiner, “Das 4. Buch Esra,” in *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*, V, Hrsg. W.G. Kümmel–H. Lichtenberger (Gütersloh, 1981), 289–412; M.A. Knibb, “Apocalyptic and Wisdom in 4 Ezra,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 13 (1982) 56–74; W. Harnisch, “Der Prophet als Widerpart und Zeuge der Offenbarung,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, ed. D. Hellholm (Tübingen, 1983), 461–493; T.A. Bergren, *4 Ezra: The Text, Origin and Early History* (Atlanta, 1990); H. Gunkel, “Das 4. Buch Esra,” in *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments*, II, Hrsg. E. Kautzsch (Darmstadt, 1994), 331–401; F. Hahn, *Frühjüdische und urchristliche Apokalyptik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1998), 63–75; K. Schmid, “Esras Begegnung mit Zion: Die Deutung der Zerstörung Jerusalems im 4. Esrabuch und das Problem des ‘bösen Herzens,’” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 29 (1998) 261–277; Stone, *Judaism*, 90–121, who hypothesises a mystical experience of the author.

Passing from Acts to the NT epistles, in 1 Cor 3:14–15 Paul implies that fire in the next world is not for destruction, but for testing and salvation: “If the work that one has built upon the basis resists, this person will receive a reward; if the work ends up with being burnt, she will suffer a loss [ζημιωθήσεται, Vulgate: *detrimementum patietur*]; however, she will be saved, but as though through fire.” Paul contemplates two outcomes of the test: either one is rewarded for one’s deeds, or one is punished, but even in the latter case one is saved. *Tertium non datur*. No cases are contemplated in which one is not saved in the end. Clearly, supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis could turn to this passage to draw inspiration. Another instance of destructive punishment that has a salvific aim comes from 1 Cor 5:5, in which Paul decides that a man who is guilty of a very serious sin must be handed to Satan “for the ruin/death [εἰς ὄλεθρον] of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved [σωθῇ] in the day of the Lord.” Paul is an important source of inspiration for supporters of the apokatastasis theory. Origen will comment on his words: *tradidit quendam de coetu ecclesiae apostolus diabolo in interitum carnis, et tradidit in carnis interitum non ut perderet traditum, sed ut spiritum traditi conservaret* (*Hom. in Ez.* 12,3). Another instance is 1 Cor 15:22–23, which is doubly inclusive: “Just as all human beings die in Adam, so will all be vivified in Christ.” Those who will be vivified in Christ are all human beings, without exception, the same who die in Adam without exception. The vivification at stake does not seem to be simply the resurrection of the body, but rather seems to entail justification and salvation. This is what is strongly suggested by Paul’s parallel passage in Rom 5:18–19:

Because of one single human, condemnation has poured upon all human beings: likewise, also thanks to the work of justice of one single human, vivifying justification pours upon all human beings [...] *all humans* [πάντες] will be constituted just.

Again, these “all” who are made just and vivified by Christ are the same “all” who have been condemned by the transgression of Adam, that is, absolutely all human beings.<sup>74</sup> The same universalism is evident in another,

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<sup>74</sup> Richard Bell, an Anglican priest and NT scholar, thinks that “the most natural reading” of Rom 5:18–19, confirmed by the context, is in reference to universal salvation. See his “Rom 5:18–19 and Universal Salvation,” *New Testament Studies* 48 (2002) 417–432, quotation from 427; Id., “The Myth of Adam and the Myth of Christ in Romans 5:12–21,” in *Paul, Luke, and the Graeco-Roman World: Festschrift A.J.M. Wedderburn*, eds. A. Christophersen et al. (Sheffield, 2002), 21–36; Id., *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul’s Theology of Israel* (Tübingen, 2003). Rom 5 considers things *sub specie aeternitatis*, revealing that God will reconcile all with himself, whereas Rom 9–11 limits itself to observe that some pagans,

clearly eschatological,<sup>75</sup> passage by Paul: 1 Cor 15:24–28. There, Paul foretells that Christ will reign until all enemies have submitted to him, whereas death will be destroyed, just as the powers of evil. At that point, Christ will hand the Kingdom—that is, all of his subjects—to the Father, so that “God will be all in all.” Origen and Gregory of Nyssa will heavily rely on this passage to support apokatastasis, which in their view will take place after the disappearance of all evil and the submission of all to Christ. They interpret this universal submission, not as forced, but as voluntary, and thus coinciding with universal salvation. This passage verbally echoes 1 Cor 9:22: “I have become all to all, in order to *save all* [πάντας].”<sup>76</sup> In turn, 1 Cor 15:24–28

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for the time being, are refusing his *kerygma*, without taking into consideration their final salvation. Bell also appeals to 2 Cor 5:19, on the reconciliation of the world with God, and Phil 2:11, according to which every tongue will finally confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. Jan Bonda, a pastor of the German reformed Church and a supporter of an eschatological universalism influenced by Barth, in *The One Purpose of God* (tr. R. Bruinsma, Grand Rapids, 1998), based himself mainly on Paul. He interpreted Rom 3:29–30 (“Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the grounds of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith,” RSV) in the sense that God wants to save all, not only the believers, but all the Jews and all the Gentiles. Also, from Rom 11 he deduced the eventual salvation of all Israel, including the Jews who now do not accept the Gospel, and maintained that this is a clue of God’s will to save all creatures. In the NT the coming of the Kingdom refers to the time in which the Godhead will draw all to itself.

<sup>75</sup> See S.M. Lewis, *So That God May Be All in All: The Apocalyptic Message of 1 Corinthians 15:12–34* (Rome, 1998). Both Paul’s universalism and the eschatological orientation of his thought should be taken into account. P. Fredriksen, “Historical Integrity, Interpretive Freedom: The Philosopher’s Paul and the Problem of Anachronism,” in *St. Paul among the Philosophers*, ed. J.D. Caputo–L. Martin Alcoff (Bloomington, 2009), Ch. 3: Badiou’s philosophical interpretation of Paul does not take into account the eschatological dimension of Paul’s thought, which is best understood within the religious and political milieu of Second Temple Judaism. Badiou sees Paul as a break from the Jewish identity and particularity (Gal 3:28); truth extends to all people. See A. Badiou, *Saint Paul et la fondation de l’universalisme* (Paris, 1997) = *Saint Paul: Foundation of Universalism*, tr. R. Brassier (Stanford, 2003), according to whom Paul’s universalism was based on his experience of the risen Christ; it is grounded in the equality of all people before Christ (Gal 3:28). On Paul’s universalism, especially with respect to the distinction between Jews and idolaters, see J.A. Linebaugh, “Announcing the Human: Rethinking the Relationship Between Wisdom of Solomon 13–15 and Romans 1.18–2.11,” *New Testament Studies* 57 (2011) 214–237; *Paul et l’unité des chrétiens*, dir. J. Schlosser (Leuven, 2010); Ben Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World* (Downers Grove, 1992), with comparison and a critical assessment of Jesus’s and Paul’s teaching on the end of times. Though, he concentrates on the imminence of eschatology for Paul, and not on apokatastasis.

<sup>76</sup> This reading is attested by a whole class of Greek mss., in Priscillian, in the Syriac Peshitta, and in the Vetus Latina and the Vulgate: *ut omnes facerem salvos / ut omnes salvos facerem*. This is also Origen’s reading in *Comm. in Cant.* 1.4.30: *perfecti quique omnibus omnia fiunt, ut omnes lucrificent*.

must be read along with Phil 3:21: the Lord “will transform our lowly body into the likeness of his glorious body, by the same power that enables him to subject all to himself.” If this subjection is salvation, as 1 Cor 15:24–28 indicates, then Phil 3:21 means that Christ’s power that will resurrect all will also save all by their submission.

Rom 11 is paramount to assess Paul’s universalism; in an eschatological framework Paul states (Rom 11:23–26) that “God has the power of grafting them [sc. Israel] again. The hardening of a part of Israel is taking place until the *totality* [πλήρωμα] of the nations/gentiles (*a*) has entered, and then *all* [πάντες] of Israel (*b*) will be saved,” where  $a + b$  = all humanity.<sup>77</sup> For “God has closed *all* [πάντας] under disobedience, so to have mercy upon *all*” (Rom 11:32). Πλήρωμα in the LXX means “totality” in Ps 23:1 in parallel with πάντες; 49:12; 88:12; 95:11 in parallel with πάντα; 97:7; Jer 8:16; 29:2; Ez 12:19 in parallel with πάντες; 19:7; 30:12. Other important Pauline passages in relation to the doctrine of apokatastasis are 2 Cor 5:19, in which Paul declares that God has reconciled all to himself thanks to Christ,<sup>78</sup> the passages concerning the “faith/faithfulness of Christ”<sup>79</sup> and Phil 2:10–11, in which Paul stresses again that each and every creature will finally submit to Christ: “that in the name of Jesus every knee may bow, in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld, and every tongue may proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Lord.” In Phil 3:21 Paul hammers home again that Christ has the power to “submit *all beings* to himself.” Now, the verb that indicates the proclamation of the lordship of Jesus Christ on the part of all is ἐξομολογέω, which in the NT always means a voluntary and spontaneous, and not forced, confession, just like ὁμολογέω and ὁμολογία. This universal confession will be voluntary,

<sup>77</sup> T. Nicklas, “Paulus und die Errettung Israels,” *Early Christianity* 2 (2011) 173–197, agrees with me that πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν means “the totality [Ganzheit bzw. Vollzahl] of the nations” and not “the fullness.” On the contrary, J. Staples, “What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with ‘All Israel’?,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130 (2011) 371–390 interprets “the fullness of the nations” and thinks that “all Israel will be saved” only thanks to the incorporation of that fullness, i.e. “Ephraim,” or “the returning remnant of the house of Israel united with the faithful from the house of Judah” (380). For a review of recent scholarship on Rom 11:25–27 see also C. Zoccali, “And so all Israel will be saved,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30 (2008) 289–318.

<sup>78</sup> Paul also contemplates the sanctification of unbelievers by believers: see 1 Cor 7:14–16. Cf. H.J. Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (Edinburgh, 2000).

<sup>79</sup> On the Pauline πῶς Χριστοῦ issue there is abundant literature; I limit myself to citing M. Hooker, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989) 321–342; K. Schenck, “2 Corinthians and the πῶς Χριστοῦ Debate,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70 (2008) 524–537; D.A. Campbell, “2 Corinthians 4:13,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009) 337–356; D. Downs, “Faith(fulness) in Christ Jesus in 2 Timothy 3:15,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131 (2012) 143–160. That in Rev 14:12 πίστις Ἰησοῦ must be understood as a subjective genitive is argued by S.K. Tonstad, *Saving God’s Reputation* (London, 2006), *praes.* Part 3.

and confirms Origen's interpretation of the eventual universal submission to Christ in 1Cor 15:25–28 as universal salvation. In Paul, remarkably, the most important passages that could inspire the supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis are found in Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Philippians, that is, letters whose authenticity is undisputed.<sup>80</sup> The language of recapitulation will also be used by the Fathers in reference to the eventual apokatastasis. This language is first found in Eph 1:10: "God has the intention to *recapitulate* [ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι] in Christ *all beings*, those in heaven and those on earth." Another deutero-Pauline epistle, Col 1:18–20, similarly declares that in the end Christ will obtain the lordship "over all beings" and that, thanks to him, the Father will "reconcile *all beings* [ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα] to Himself." Again, reconciliation demands that it be voluntary.

The Pastoral Epistles, which imitate Paul in order to interpret—often tendentiously—his thought, at least 1 Timothy and Titus,<sup>81</sup> are no less universalistic than Paul is. In 1 Tim 1:15 the author observes that Christ has come into the world in order to save sinners, and in 1 Tim 1:20 punishment in hell is presented as therapeutic. Indeed, the author mentions two men, "whom I have handed to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme any more." 1 Tim 2:4–6 is probably the most important passage in all of the Pastoral Epistles in reference to eschatological universalism:

God our Saviour wants *all humans* [πάντας ἀνθρώπους] *to be saved* and attain the knowledge of Truth. For God is one and only one, and the mediator between God and humans is one: the human being Jesus Christ, who offered himself as a ransom for all.

1Tim 4:10 is also telling: "We have put our hope into the living God, who is the Saviour of *all human beings*, especially of those who believe." The use of "especially" implies a "non exclusively," and the insistence on "all humans" as the recipients of God's salvation in this letter is notable. This is also to be found in another Pastoral, Tit 2:11: "For God's Grace has appeared, which brings about salvation for *all humans*."

<sup>80</sup> On the paternity of the Pauline epistles see, e.g., J. Fitzgerald–W. Meeks, *The Letters of St Paul* (New York, 2007).

<sup>81</sup> It is usually assumed among scholars that the Pastorals are all pseudepigraphical, be they all by the same author or not. One of the few exceptions, besides Jerome Murphy O'Connor, is the thesis of Michel Gourgues: while 1 Timothy and Titus were certainly not composed by Paul, 2 Timothy is probably authentic at least for about three fifths (2Tim 1:1–2:13 + 4:6–22 is authentic; 2Tim 2:14–4:5 was possibly inserted afterwards). See his *Les deux lettres à Timothée. La lettre à Tite* (Paris, 2009). His hypothesis has momentous implications from the historical point of view, given the details that 2 Timothy provides on Paul's last months on earth (arguably during his second detention in Rome, not that reflected at the end of Acts) and acquaintances.

Canonical texts belonging to the Petrine tradition are also notable, particularly 1 Pet 3:19–21. Here, Christ is said to have proclaimed the salvation to the spirits who were prisoners in hell because long before they had refused to believe (ἀπειθήσασιν) and therefore had perished in the flood. Now, those who, on the contrary, were saved (δiesōthēsan) on the ark are interpreted as the *typos* of those who are saved through baptism. But what is remarkable is that in this passage Christ is said to go save the others as well, those sinners who had not believed and had perished in the flood, and who, by contrast, symbolise those who are not saved by baptism.<sup>82</sup> This motif of Christ's *descensus ad inferos*<sup>83</sup> is well attested, remarkably, in other "Petrine" texts such as the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Apocalypse of Peter*, both datable to the second century,<sup>84</sup> and will inspire many supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the theme of Christ's salvific descent to hell is found in some early Christian writings that were initially considered to be revealed and divinely inspired, but were later rejected from the NT canon, such as the *Shepherd of Hermas* (simil. 9,16,6) and the *Gospel of Peter*, in a scene (10,41) that seems to belong to its most ancient layer, perhaps even dating back to the middle of the first century:<sup>86</sup> "The soldiers then saw three human beings

<sup>82</sup> H. Pietras, *L'escatologia della Chiesa* (Rome, 2006), 38 (with my review in *Augustinianum* 48 [2008] 247–253) considers 1 Pet 3:19–21 an expression of universal salvation.

<sup>83</sup> J.A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead* (Oxford, 2001), 91–107; Pietras, *L'escatologia*, 37–46; E. Norelli, "La discesa di Gesù agli inferi nelle testimonianze dei primi due secoli," in *Patì sotto Ponzio Pilato* ..., eds. F. Bosin–C. Dotolo (Bologna, 2007), 133–158; for later developments see R. Gounelle, *La descente du Christ aux enfers* (Turnhout, 2000).

<sup>84</sup> For the latter, see below in this same chapter, the section on the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

<sup>85</sup> W.J. Dalon, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits* (Rome, 1989); A. Reichert, *Eine urchristliche praeparatio ad martyrium* (Frankfurt, 1989), 208–247; R. Feldmeier, "Überlegungen zur Soteriologie und Anthropologie des 1. Petrusbriefes," in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition*, ed. J. Schlosser (Leuven, 2004), 291–306; Id., *Der erste Brief des Petrus* (Leipzig, 2005), 132–139.

<sup>86</sup> The *Gospel of Peter* is identified by P.F. Beatrice with the Gospel written by Mark in Rome, different from the later, canonical Gospel of Mark ("The 'Gospel According to the Hebrews' in the Apostolic Fathers," *Novum Testamentum* 48,2 (2006) 147–195, *praes.* 149–151, 194). Cf. E. Hennecke–W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1964), 169–187; J.D. Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke* (San Francisco, 1988); H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (Philadelphia, 1990), 217–223; Id., *Introduction to the New Testament* (Berlin, 2002), 167–169; P.A. Mirecki, "Peter, Gospel of," in *The Anchor Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 5 (New York, 1992), 278–281; Y. Leroy, "L'Évangile de Pierre et la notion d'hétérodoxie," *Revue Biblique* 114 (2007) 80–98, with a dating to the beginning of the second century CE; *Das Evangelium nach Petrus*, Hrsg. Kraus–Nicklas, in which Crossan repeats his dating to the I cent. CE (117–134), which is accepted as possible by Penner and VanderStichele as well (351); the other contributors tend to stick to the second century; P. Foster, *The Gospel of Peter*, Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary (Leiden, 2010).

coming out of the tomb: two of them held and lifted the other one, and a cross followed them. The head of these two reached to heaven, but the one whom they supported with their hands was higher than heaven. And they heard a voice from heaven ask: 'Have you preached to those who were sleeping?' And from the cross they heard the reply: 'Yes, I have!'" (10,39–42). In this scene, the docetic elements that are typical of the most recent layers of this Gospel are missing. Early Christian authors who will insist on Christ's salvific *descensus ad inferos* are Justin (*Dial.* 72,4), Clement,<sup>87</sup> Origen (*CC* 2,43; *Hom. in Sam.* 2,5), Ephrem,<sup>88</sup> and others, as well as the *Odes of Solomon* and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, to which I shall return in a moment. In 2 Pet 3:9 another universalistic statement is found: "God does not want anyone to perish, but he wants *all* to arrive at repentance / conversion."<sup>89</sup>

Finally, as for Revelation, is that in contrast to the doctrine of apokatastasis or universal salvation?<sup>90</sup> Although many Origenian and anti-millenarian authors and traditions had difficulties in accepting the very canonicity of this book for a long time, Origen himself regarded it as inspired, commented on it, and did not find it at odds with his own eschatological views. A comparison with crucial tenets of Pauline eschatology, which were very probably known to the author of this book, allows the contemporary scholar to reassess this difficult question. Revelation does not necessarily oppose the theory of apokatastasis: all depends on its interpretation. This, of course, was clear already to Origen as well as his opponents in the struggle for the interpretation of the Bible. The Apocalypse of John, in a visionary fashion, predicts<sup>91</sup> the eventual eviction of evil and elimination of death, which is

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<sup>87</sup> See below in this same chapter, the section on Clement.

<sup>88</sup> See below, Ch. 3, section on Ephrem.

<sup>89</sup> However, the author seems also to welcome the view of the perishing of the "ignorant and unstable," seen in a Stoic perspective. See J.A. Harrill, "Stoic Physics, the Universal Conflagration, and the Eschatological Destruction of the 'Ignorant and Unstable' in 2 Peter," in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, eds. T. Rasimus–I. Dundenberg–T. Engberg-Pedersen (Peabody, MA, 2010), 115–139.

<sup>90</sup> I first presented the following section in a lecture, "The Apocalypse in Origen and the Origenian Tradition: A Problem of Interpretation," at the University of Chicago, Divinity School, 25 May 2010. I am very grateful to all those in attendance for the fruitful discussion, and in particular to Hans Dieter Betz, Aaron Johnson, Hans-Joseph Klauck, and Margaret Mitchell.

<sup>91</sup> Of course bibliography on the Apocalypse is very extensive and in constant growth. For its eschatology I limit myself to citing *Die Johannesapokalypse. Kontexte, Konzepte, Wirkungen*, Hrsg. J. Frey–J.A. Kelhoffer–F. Tóth (Tübingen, 2010), esp. J. Frey, "Was erwartet die Johannesapokalypse? Zur Eschatologie des letzten Buchs der Bibel," and M.B. Stephens, *Annihilation or Renewal? The Meaning and Function of New Creation in the Book of Revelation*



also foretold in 1 Cor 15:24–28, a text that, as I shall argue, was very probably known to the author of the Apocalypse. A close analysis of Rev 19–22, also in the light of ancient versions and interpretations—which are rarely taken into account by modern commentators<sup>92</sup>—, suggests that the lake of fire that appears therein has a purifying function for humans, the death of death, also proclaimed therein, means the end of death, and the ceasing of all *κατάθεμα* indicates the end of all exclusion and malediction. The “nations,” which repeatedly seem to be destroyed in the course of the book, continue to reappear anew and are said to finally benefit from a therapy; after purification and healing, they too will enter the heavenly Jerusalem.

Let me briefly analyse the most relevant passages. In Rev 19:20 there appears for the first time the lake of fire that in this book is the place of punishment and death as opposed to the place of blessedness, which is the heavenly Jerusalem. Notably, it is first of all the symbols of the powers of evil that are said to be cast into this lake: the beast and the false prophet. According to the interpretation of *Schol. in Ap.* 38,<sup>93</sup> which probably goes back to Origen, the beast represents all evil, all iniquity (*ἀνακεφαλαιώσις πάσης τῆς ἀδικίας*), so that every force of apostasy (*πάσα δύναμις ἀποστατική*) from the Good may be cast into the fire. Clearly, Rev 19:20 is a reminiscence of Dan 7:11.26, another prophetic text, where the beast is cast into the fire to be utterly destroyed. Indeed, I find that Bauckham is right to argue that the whole of Revelation strongly conveys the idea of the eventual destruction of evil: this is essentially what its author prefigures in his visionary account,<sup>94</sup>

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(Tübingen, 2011). A useful survey of the main interpretations of the Apocalypse is offered by W. Glabach, *Reclaiming the Book of Revelation* (Bern, 2007), Chs. 1 and 3.

<sup>92</sup> See, just for instance, among the most recent and best commentaries, B.K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (Louisville, 2009), with virtually no references to Patristic exegetes.

<sup>93</sup> Ed. C.I. Dyobouniotes–A. von Harnack, *Der Scholien-Kommentar des Origenes zur Apokalypse Johannis* (TU 38,3; Leipzig, 1911), 21–44. Harnack supported the paternity of Origen; see, however, É. Junod, “Que savons-nous des scholies d’Origène?,” in *Origeniana VI*, eds. G. Dorival–A. Le Boulluc (Leuven, 1995), 138. Not all of these scholia are in fact sure to go back to Origen, but a good deal of them probably do. That the content of these scholia is Origenian remains probable even on the hypothesis of P. Tzamalikos, *The Real Cassian Revisited* (Leiden, 2012), and *An Ancient Commentary on the Book of Revelation: A Critical Edition of the Scholia in Apocalypsin* (Cambridge, 2013). He suggests that the small collection of scholia in our possession was compiled by Cassian the Sabaite in the sixth century, on the basis of a lost commentary on Revelation by Didymus the Blind, besides Origen himself and few other sources. Although Origen never wrote a full commentary on the Apocalypse, the main source of Didymus’s exegesis is easy to guess.

<sup>94</sup> R. Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge, 1993). This is the essential result of the triumph of justice in Revelation; see E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis, 1998).

which is eschatological.<sup>95</sup> In Rev 20:9–10 it is made clear that the “lake of fire” is formed by the fire that was sent by God from on high, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah: “Fire descended from heaven, sent by God, and devoured them, and the devil who deceives them was cast into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet also are, and they will be tested / tormented day and night for ages and ages.” It is obvious that the text is referring to the Genesis episode of Sodom and Gomorrah burnt by the heavenly fire and sulphur sent by God (19:24), which in the LXX reads as follows: καὶ Κύριος ἔβρεξεν θεῖον καὶ πῦρ παρὰ Κυρίου ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, in the Vulgate *Dominus pluit super Sodomam et Gomorram sulphur et ignem a Domino de caelo*.<sup>96</sup> Patently, the provenance of the fire from God is strongly emphasised: God is the subject of the sending, and soon after it is said again that the fire comes from God, and moreover it is added that it comes from heaven, to the point that in the Hebrew text the holy Tetragrammaton is repeated twice within the same clause: “The Lord had sulphur and fire from the Lord from heavens rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah.” The fire sent by the Lord is the divine fire, and here in Rev 20:9 John characterises this fire in the selfsame way as in the Sodom episode: πῦρ ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ = πῦρ παρὰ Κυρίου ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Sulphur is joined to fire both in the Sodom episode and in Revelation’s lake of fire. Like fire, and even more clearly than fire itself, this element points to purification. Given its purifying and healing properties, sulphur is used in medicine still nowadays, for instance as an

<sup>95</sup> Although this is often neglected in recent scholarship, the future element in Revelation is important—as is rightly emphasised by A.K.W. Siew, *The War between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses* (London, 2005), esp. Ch. 3—and should be taken into account in its interpretation. However, Rev 19:20 presents a textual problem related to the mention of sulphur, which is absent in the Daniel passage: the genitive participle τῆς καιομένης, attested in several mss. including Sinaiticus, is difficult to fit into the syntax of the sentence (it is well known that Revelation has linguistic irregularities: A.D. Callahan, “The Language of the Apocalypse,” *Harvard Theological Review* 88 [1995] 453–470, against the idea of a Hebrew Vorlage or of mistakes due to ignorance, supposes the intentional construction of an idiolect); hence the normalising variant reading, attested in all other mss., τὴν καιομένην, referring to λίμνην; the translation of the Vulgate, *bestia et pseudopropheta* [...] *vivi missi sunt hii duo in stagnum ignis ardentis sulphure*, also allows for a Greek τοῦ καιομένου referring to the fire. E. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John*, tr. M.P. Johnson–A. Kamesar (Grand Rapids, 2006), 87 e.g., renders: “The two were thrown alive into the marsh of fire, fire of a marsh burning with sulphur,” as it were εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς τῆς λίμνης καιομένης ἐν θεῖῳ (contrast D.E. Aune, *Revelation*, vol. 3 [Nashville, 1997–1998], 1041, 1065). The parallel in 21:8 (ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ θεῖῳ), where the καιομένην participle refers to λίμνη, points to a reconstruction as follows: εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς τὴν καιομένην ἐν θεῖῳ.

<sup>96</sup> See also the punishment of Gog in Ez 38:22.

antiseptic, a fungicide, and in mucolytics. This is a clue suggesting that the lake of fire will purify those who are cast into it, at least as for human sinners (on whom see below).

The devil and the powers of evil, it is said, will be tested in the fire “for ages and ages,” i.e., for a very long time, or perhaps even forever. It is to be remarked that only of the devil and the evil powers, among those who in this book are said to be cast into the lake of fire, is it specified that their dwelling in the lake of fire will last “for ages and ages.” If we may look for strict consistency in this text, which is visionary but nevertheless does have a unity and a coherence of its own, the mention of “days and nights” in connection with this punishment means that the aforementioned test or torment will last as long as there are nights and days. But in the end there will be no more time and no more nights, as is stated in Rev 21:26. The same is affirmed in Rev 14:11 concerning the adorers of the beast representing evil, who will be tested “for ages and ages, night and day.” Time and nights and days will come to an end in the *telos*, which is the Alpha-and-Omega itself, just as it was the *arkhē* (cf. 21:6; 3:15).<sup>97</sup> Exactly Revelation stresses that there will be no more night (21:25), no more death (21:4), neither sun nor moon (21:23; 22:5), for Jesus says that all that was in time will pass (21:4) and he makes all things new (21:5).<sup>98</sup>

Soon after, in Rev 20:14–15 “the lake of fire” appears again, and thrice. It is a combination of punishment in water (flood) and in the fire from heaven.<sup>99</sup> After announcing that the dead will rise and will be judged according to their works, John goes on to state: “And death [ὁ θάνατος] and hell [ὁ ᾗδης] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death [ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεῦτερος].<sup>100</sup> the lake of fire. And [καί] if one was not found written in the book

<sup>97</sup> It is debated whether ἀρχή-and-τέλος here is Christ or God. See D. Guthrie, “The Christology of Revelation,” in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ*, eds. J.B. Green–M. Turner (Grand Rapids, 1994), 397–409; C.H. Talbert, “The Christology of the Apocalypse,” in *Who Do You Say That I Am?*, eds. M.A. Powell–D.R. Bauer (Louisville, 1999), 166–184.

<sup>98</sup> This scene is rich in references to Isaiah, esp. for the notion of renewing all things (43:19), the old passing away (43:18; 65:17).

<sup>99</sup> The same combination of water, fire, and sulphur occurs in the *Similitudes Book of 1 Enoch*, 67:5–7, as a punishment for those angels who “perverted those who dwell upon the earth.” See Lupieri, *Commentary*, 309–310, who also observes that “flames of sulphur” are probably the “foundation” of Sheol in 4QBeat or 4Q525, fr. 15,6.

<sup>100</sup> For this notion in early Christianity and ancient Judaism see A. Houtman–M. Misset-van de Weg, “The Fate of the Wicked: Second Death in Early Jewish and Christian Texts,” in *Empsychoi Logoi: Religious Innovations in Antiquity. Festschrift van der Horst*, ed. A. Houtman–A. de Jong–M. Misset van de Weg (Leiden, 2008), Ch. 23.

of life, one was cast into the lake of fire.” The casting of death into the second death means the death of death. It may also be supposed that καί at the beginning of v. 15 is epexegetical (“that is” rather than “and”): first of all it is death and hell that cannot be found in the book of life, because they are not creatures of God. Death, like evil, was not created at the beginning by God, and will not subsist in the end.<sup>101</sup> The epexegetical function of καί is well known in the *koinē* precisely for Johannine works (e.g., John 4:10; 5:25; 1:16),<sup>102</sup> and it is supported by the Latin translations of Rev 20:14–15, both the Vetus Latina and the Vulgate. Both of these have a singular pronoun, endowed with a relative-indefinite sense, at the beginning of v. 15. As for the Vetus Latina, Irenaeus (*AH* 5,35), its principal witness, has the singular, as in the Greek original: *Et mors et inferni missi sunt in stagnum ignis, secundam mortem. Et si quis non est inventus in libro vitae scriptus, missus est in stagnum ignis.* The Vulgate, with its relative clause, offers an even better confirmation: *Et inferus [or: infernus]<sup>103</sup> et mors missi sunt in stagnum ignis. Haec mors secunda est, stagnum ignis. Et qui non est inventus in libro vitae scriptus missus est in stagnum ignis.* Death and hell are not written in the book of life. The Coptic version of Rev 20:14 supports my hypothesis even more strongly. It includes death and hell in a sort of hendiadys, so that the initial “and” of v. 15 can even more easily be taken as epexegetical: it is primarily death and hell that are not found in the book of life and undergo the second death. So, the death of death is the destruction of death. This is the Sahidic version:<sup>104</sup>

αΓΩ ΠΗΟΥ ΜΗ ΔΗΝΤΕ ΔΥΝΟΧΟΥ ΕΞΡΑΙ ΕΤΛΙΝΝΗ Ν̄ΣΑΤΕ. ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΠΗΟΥ ΜΗΕΖΩΝΑΥ  
ΕΤΕ ΤΛΙΝΝΗ ΤΕ Ν̄ΣΑΤΕ. ΑΓΩ ΠΕΤΕΝΠΟΥΡΕ ΕΡΟΥ ΕΦΩΗΡ ΕΠΛΩΩΝΕ Μ̄ΠΩΝΔ̄ ΔΥΝΟΧΩ  
ΕΤΛΙΝΝΗ Ν̄ΣΑΤΕ,

And they cast<sup>105</sup> (the) death with hell into the lake of fire. This is the second death, which is the lake of fire. That is, him whom they did not find written in the book of life, they cast into the lake of fire.

<sup>101</sup> This is one of the main arguments that Origen and Evagrius will use in defence of their doctrine of apokatastasis: there was a time when evil did not exist, and there will come a time when it will no more exist (see below, Ch. 3, section on Evagrius).

<sup>102</sup> See W. Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin/New York, 1988), 797,3; also M. Zerwick, *Graecitas Biblica Novi Testamenti* (Rome, 1966), 154.

<sup>103</sup> This is the variant reading of mss. F  $\Lambda$  c.

<sup>104</sup> It presents no textual difficulty and has only insignificant variant readings amidst the Coptic mss. See *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect*, vol. 7 (reprint of the 1911–1924 ed.; Osnabrück, 1969), 510–518.

<sup>105</sup> It is usual in Coptic to render a passive by a plural third-person active, with the subject of the passive as an object.

The Bohairic version disagrees with the Sahidic and the Greek in that, instead of εἰσράι εἰς τὴν λίμνην ἡκατε, “into the lake of fire,” it reads: εἰς τὴν λίμνην ἡκατε εὐμορ ἡοην, “down into the lake of fire, which burns with sulphur,” or εὐμορ ῥοην, “which burns and sulphur” (A N). This is clearly an addition from Rev 21:8, which is anticipated here.<sup>106</sup> In v. 15, the singular “he who was not found [...] was cast” is present in Greek and in all the versions: the Vulgate (*qui non est inventus [...] missus est*), the Syriac, the Armenian, the Coptic (lit.: “he whom they did not find [...] they cast him”),<sup>107</sup> and the Ethiopic version: “he who was not found [...] they will cast him.” This one who is not found in the book of life is first of all death-and-hell.

The Syriac, however, is represented only by the Harklean version (seventh century),<sup>108</sup> because in the earlier versions, namely the Vetus Syra (late second to fourth century)<sup>109</sup> and the Peshitta of the NT (fifth century),<sup>110</sup> the Apocalypse of John was absent: for it was not considered to be a part of the canonical Bible.<sup>111</sup> This is not a problem limited to the Syriac world:

<sup>106</sup> The same addition is also found in the Ethiopic version: “The lake of fire which is full of sulphur. But the second death is the Gehenna of fire.” Verse 14b is identical in Greek and in the Syriac, Coptic and Latin translations: “This is the second death: the lake of fire”; *Haec mors secunda est, stagnum ignis*.

<sup>107</sup> Only one Coptic version has ἀνοχοῦ, “they cast them.”

<sup>108</sup> It was completed in 616 CE in a monastery outside Alexandria by Thomas of Ḥarqel, who revised the Peshitta on the basis of a former revision promoted by Philoxenus of Mabbug and completed by his chorepiscopus Polycarp in 508 CE. The Harklean version, which covers the whole of the NT, is an extremely literal translation into unintelligible Syriac, based on a highly refined translation technique, much more text-oriented than reader-oriented. See S. Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition* (Piscataway, NJ, 2006), 19–20; 35–37. One of the earliest witnesses to this text, ms. Vat. Syr. 268, was considered by Angelo Mai to have been written by Thomas himself (in any case, it dates to the eighth or early ninth century).

<sup>109</sup> The Vetus Syra is the most ancient surviving Syriac version of the Gospels after Tatian's *Diatessaron* (fragments of which are preserved mostly thanks to Ephraem: see now C. Lange, *Ephraem der Syrer: Kommentar zum Diatessaron I-II* [Turnhout, 2008], with my rev. *Exemplaria Classica* 14 [2010] 411–415). Known in Syriac as the “Gospel of the Separated” in reference to its distinction from the *Diatessaron* (in that the latter was a Gospel harmony, whereas the Vetus Syra translated the four Gospels separately), it dates to the late second century in its earliest phases, and to the early fourth in the latest. It is likely that the Vetus Syra originally extended to Acts and the Epistles, but neither section is included in the surviving mss. Codices Sinaiticus and Curetonianus represent two stages of the Vetus Syra. See, e.g., Brock, *Bible*, 17, 19, 33–34, 111–114.

<sup>110</sup> Born as a revision of the Vetus Syra and completed in the fifth century for the NT (the earliest among the many mss. stem from the fifth-sixth century onwards), the Peshitta was probably propagated from Edessa and many early mss. of it are equipped with the Eusebian Canons. See Brock, *Bible*, 17–18; 34–35. Scholarship on the Peshitta is very rich; I entirely omit it.

<sup>111</sup> On the reception of Revelation see, e.g., N.B. Stonehouse, *The Apocalypse in the Ancient*

Marcion and his followers also rejected this book, just like the Roman presbyter Caius, who ascribed it to the Gnostic Cerinthus. Dionysius of Alexandria, a disciple of Origen's, after stating that some attributed this book to Cerinthus, did not reject it altogether, but ascribed it to another John, different from the author of the Gospel and Letters, and, lamenting its obscurity and solecisms, claimed that the Apocalypse must be interpreted allegorically (ap. Eus. *HE* 7,24,3–25,26). Another author who was influenced by Origen,<sup>112</sup> Methodius, interpreted this writing allegorically, as Origen himself had done. Eusebius, an admirer of Origen as well,<sup>113</sup> in *HE* 3,25,4 hesitantly lists the Apocalypse of John among the spurious writings of the NT, while observing that some accept it, but others reject it. Eusebius had an aversion to chiliasm: for this reason he regarded Papias, the initiator of such a literal interpretation of Revelation, as a man of “extremely small intelligence” (*HE* 3,39). Another Father who appreciated Origen's thought, Cyril of Jerusalem, did not deem this book canonical (*Catech.* 4,36). In fact, its canonicity was considered doubtful for many centuries, especially in areas where Origen's influence was strong, such as Cappadocia or Syria—in my opinion not so much for a supposed difficulty in squaring its contents with the doctrine of apokatastasis as for the millenarian speculations it had brought about due to a very literal exegesis. Indeed, the Cappadocian Fathers did not regard Revelation as canonical. Gregory of Nyssa puts it among “the apocryphal writings”;<sup>114</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus does not include it in his canon (*Carm. Dogm.* 12; PG 37,474), and Amphilochius of Iconium in his NT canon at the end of his Iambs to Seleucus declares that the Apocalypse of John is accepted by some,

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*Church* (Grand Rapids, 1929); *The Way the World Ends? The Apocalypse of John in Culture and Ideology*, eds. W.J. Lyons–J. Økland (Sheffield, 2009), esp. Ch. 2 (J. Roberts, “Decoding, Reception History, Poetry: Three Hermeneutical Approaches to the Apocalypse”) and 9 (A. Hold-enried, “Observations on the Reception of Revelation, c. 1250–1700”); J. Kovacs–C. Rowland, *Revelation* (Oxford, 2004), which has a great deal on reception history; J.L. Kovacs, “The Revelation to John: Lessons from the History of the Book's Reception,” *Word and World* 25.3 (2005) 255–263. See also P. Prigent, *L'Apocalypse de Saint Jean* (Genève, 2000 [first ed. Paris 1981]) = *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, tr. by W. Pradels (Tübingen, 2004), and A. Le Boulluec, “Le problème de l'extension du canon des Écritures aux premiers siècles,” in *Des Écritures d'inspiration divine?*, eds. P. Gibert–Ch. Theobald (Paris, 2007), 113–160.

<sup>112</sup> For Methodius's adherence to Origen's thought, apart from limited disagreements concerning the modality of resurrection, see I. Ramelli, “L'Inno a Cristo-Logos nel *Simposio* di Metodio,” in *La poesia cristiana antica* (Rome, 2008), 257–280.

<sup>113</sup> See below, Ch. 3, section on Eusebius.

<sup>114</sup> In *De Deit. adv. Evagr.* (GNO IX 337) he refers to Rev 3:15 by saying: “I heard John the Evangelist say in the apocryphal writings,” the same formula reserved by him for the apocryphal *proto-Gospel of James* in *In d. Nat. Chr.* PG 46,1137D.

but rejected by most people.<sup>115</sup> It is significant that the first known Greek commentary on Revelation was written only in the sixth century, by Oecumenius<sup>116</sup>—though he may have been preceded by Didymus's commentary and by Origen's homilies on the Apocalypse;<sup>117</sup> neither work is extant, but if they existed their drift was undoubtedly allegorical. In the West, in the late third century, Victorinus of Pettau had offered a commentary, all based on a very literal interpretation, and consistently bristling with millenarian notions—a line opposed to that of Origen. In the fourth century, again in the West, there came Tychonius's commentary and Jerome's expurgated version of Victorinus's commentary. This was expurgated of course because Jerome, who was heavily influenced by Origen at least until his sudden U-turn,<sup>118</sup> knew very well, and wrote in his own commentary on Isaiah—using Origen's terminology—that “to interpret the Apocalypse according to the letter is ‘to Judaize.’” Thus, in the East, only at the end of the sixth century did a commentary on the Apocalypse appear (or perhaps appear again after Origen's and Didymus's possible allegorical exegeses of Revelation). Oecumenius cites the Cappadocians and Eusebius as *auctoritates*, is influenced by Origen, and like Origen defends the authenticity of Revelation, which he reads allegorically and mystically, against all its chiliastic interpretations. In this way he can also explain away the violence in many episodes of this book, which is unworthy of God.<sup>119</sup> He even tries to square the idea of an

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<sup>115</sup> But also in the school of Antioch, John Chrysostom, in his remarkably extensive writings, never cites this book; similarly, Theodoret in his biblical list (PG 84,1276) does not include Revelation, and he never cites it in his own works, apart from an allusion deriving from Athanasius.

<sup>116</sup> It was recovered by Diekamp at the end of the nineteenth century. Edition: H.C. Hoskier, *The Complete Commentary of Oecumenius on the Apocalypse* (Ann Arbor, 1928), 29–260; today, the best critical edition is M. de Groote, *Oecumenii Commentarius in Apocalypsin* (Leuven, 1999). Id., “Die Literatur der Kirchenväter im Apokalypsekommentar des Oecumenius,” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 7 (2003) 251–262, shows that Oecumenius mentions fifteen Patristic authors, but was strongly influenced by only five: Cyril of Alexandria, Eusebius, Gregory Nyssen, Hippolytus of Rome, and Methodius. *Oecumenius: Commentary on the Apocalypse*, tr. J.N. Suggit (Washington, 2006), is the first complete English tr.; in the intr. Suggit discusses Oecumenius's relationship to Origen.

<sup>117</sup> On the latter see J.F.T. Kelly, “Early Medieval Evidence for Twelve Homilies by Origen on the Apocalypse,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 39 (1985) 273–279: an early Medieval prologue to an anonymous Irish commentary on the Apocalypse, preserved in a ninth-century ms. (Bamberg, Staatliche Bibliothek Patr. 102 [B.V. 18] fols. 101–110), attests to the existence of twelve homilies on the Apocalypse composed by Origen. At that time, these homilies were preserved, and, according to Kelly, they may well have been authentic.

<sup>118</sup> On which see below, Ch. 3, the section on Jerome and Rufinus.

<sup>119</sup> In discussing Rev 18:4–8, e.g., he insists that God punishes much less severely than the offence merits.

αἰώνιος punishment with the Origenian doctrine of apokatastasis in 5,19,1–4, although he is quick to assert his agreement with the official doctrine of the church.

According to Revelation, death and hell, physical and spiritual death, which are not creatures of God, are doomed to the second death, i.e. the death of death, because death is not alive, it was not created at the beginning, and it was not given life by God. It appeared as a result of sin, and will not subsist in the end, as Paul also maintained in 1 Cor 15:26. Thus, death and hell will die and disappear.<sup>120</sup> The total destruction of death in the “second death” according to the Apocalypse of John is indeed in complete agreement with Paul’s eschatological revelation in 1 Cor 15:26: “the last enemy, death, will be destroyed,” a text that the author of the Apocalypse probably knew (see below). If the death of death means the eventual destruction of death, foretold both in the Apocalypse and by Paul, it becomes clear that in Rev 21:4 the statement, “death will be no more” (ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι; Vulgate: *mors ultra non erit*) does not concern only the heavenly Jerusalem, but is an absolute declaration, perfectly consistent with the throwing of death into the second death. Now, if the death of death means that death will not exist any more, what is the meaning of the θάνατος αἰώνιος represented by the lake of fire for the creatures who are said to be thrown into it? These are sinners, who cannot enter the heavenly Jerusalem,<sup>121</sup> or not yet, as long as they remain sinners, but their permanence in the lake of fire, the second death, is in no way declared to be eternal (Rev 21:8).<sup>122</sup> According to

<sup>120</sup> “The death,” πῦρος, is the Sahidic reading, in line with the Greek, Syriac, and Armenian versions, one part of the Bohairic tradition, and the Vulgate. Another part of the Bohairic tradition has the variant πῦρον, “the abyss.” The Ethiopian is similar: “they cast Sîôl and death,” corresponding to Greek θάνατος and ἄβυσσος. Only an Armenian version is isolated in its understanding: in reference to those who in v. 13 are said to be judged according to their works, it is said: “and they were delivered to death and hell and to the lake of fire.”

<sup>121</sup> A. Álvarez Valdés, *La nueva Jerusalén* (Estella, 2005) contends that the New Jerusalem is not an eschatological reality, but has been already inaugurated by Christ’s resurrection. I am not sure, but my argument would hold even in this case.

<sup>122</sup> In the Vulgate the passage reads: *Timidis autem et incredulis et execratis et homicidis et fornicatoribus et veneficis et idolatris et omnibus mendacibus, pars illorum erit in stagno ardenti igne et sulphure, quod est mors secunda*. The last part is translated in the Vetus Latina as follows: *pars erit in stagno ignis, quod ardet, et sulfure: quod est mors secunda*. Slight variant readings are attested by other witnesses to the Vetus Latina, such as *particula in stagno ignis et sulphuris*, and *pars eorum in stagno ardente et sulphure, quod est mors secunda*. Again in Rev 21:8, the Coptic translates as follows, in reference to the unfaithful, murderers, fornicators, idolaters, sorcerers, and liars: ερε τεγτο νααρωπε ρη τλιννη ετχερο ρη ογκωρετ μη ογνη. ετε παι πε πμογ ημερσναγ, “their portion will be in the lake which is kindled in a fire



Lupieri,<sup>123</sup> the “second death” represented by the lake of fire is antithetically connected with the first resurrection: he imagines a second wave of resurrection, so that the second death can take place, because only the living can die, and only those who have come back to life can die again. Therefore, Rev 20:5 should be understood to mean that after the thousand years the rest of the dead will also be resurrected. I think that, while the second death in the case of death itself means the death of death, i.e. its total disappearance, as I have shown, in the case of humans it means spiritual death as opposed to merely physical death; it is the second death after the first death, which was the death of the body: the second death, which involves not all humans, but only sinners, is seen as the exclusion from the Good, from the communion with God, from blessedness, thus from the holy Jerusalem. Notably, nowhere in the Apocalypse is this death said to be eternal. The second death that sinners will experience is the death occurring in the other world as opposed to that occurring in this world; for humans it will be their *θάνατος* or *κόλασις αἰώνιος*, whereas for death itself it will mean its elimination, the death of death. This is why, since death will be no more, the “death” of humans in the lake of fire will consist, not in their *annihilation*, but in their *purification*.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, it is nowhere said that sinners will remain in the lake of fire forever. This fire, connected with the judgment concerning the deeds of each one, can have a purifying function for them, for it may well be the same as that mentioned in 1 Cor 3:13–15—again, a text with which I think the author of Revelation was familiar—as testing the works of each one and destroying the evil works while purifying the sinner, who will suffer a loss, but will be saved through fire. In *Hom. 3 in Ps. 36*,<sup>1</sup> Origen refers precisely to

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with a sulphur, which is this: the second death.” The Bohairic, differently from the Sahidic, transliterates *μέρος* for “portion”: *ποῦμερος ἐφεσάου*, “their portion will be.” The Syriac and the Vulgate (*pars illorum erit*) are analogous; only the Ethiopic has “their affliction will be.” The description of the lake is very similar in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Armenian; the Bohairic version is slightly different: *ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τοῦ θείου*, “the lake of the fire with the sulphur”; the Ethiopic renders “the gehenna of fire and sulphur,” and one Armenian simply has, “the lake of sulphur.” The last proposition in v. 8 is slightly different, again, in the Bohairic version, which, instead of “which is this: the second death,” has the more fluent form *ἐπεὶ πᾶσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων* *πῆ, “which is the second death,”* closer to the Greek, the Vg, the Syriac, and the Armenian; the Ethiopic reads: “And this is the second death.”

<sup>123</sup> *Commentary*, 327.

<sup>124</sup> That “second death” means “eternal torment” is maintained by Aune, *Revelation*, 1091–1093; J. Lambrechts, “Final Judgment and Ultimate Blessings,” *Biblica* 81 (2000) 362–385 = *Collected Studies on Pauline Literature and the Book of Revelation* (Rome, 2001), 395–417, *praes.* 401, also inclines to the same view. See however P.-M. Bogaert, “La ‘seconde mort’ à l’époque des Tannaïm,” in *Vie et survie dans les civilisations orientales* (Leuven, 1993), 199–207.

the lake of fire: *si quidem Aegyptii sumus et sequimur Pharaonem diabolum, praeceptis eius oboedientes, demergimur in illum fluvium sive lacum igneum, cum inventa fuerint in nobis peccata*. In the previous passage, Origen has explained that the permanence of each one in the otherworldly fire will be proportional to each one's sins.

In this passage, the fire and sulphur are a further reminiscence of those which were sent by God upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and which, besides being mentioned in Genesis, occur again in an allusion in Ps 10:7 and, in the NT, in Luke 17:29. In Deut 29:23 the sulphur is associated with salt, but the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed by God's fire, is explicitly mentioned. Now, salt too, just as the divine fire, is associated with the eschatological test in Mark 9:49, a text I have already analysed, where this fire is presented as purifying and performing the disinfecting function of salt: "all will be salted by this fire," if they have lost their salt in this life.<sup>125</sup> That the context is eschatological and that this salting is, again, the action of the πῦρ αἰώνιον, the fire of the other world,<sup>126</sup> is made clear by the immediately preceding mention of the fire of Gehenna that does not go out and the worm that does not die: these expressions derive from Isa 66:24<sup>127</sup> and are aimed at differentiating that fire and that worm from the fire and worms of this world, which can be put out and killed, respectively, by anyone. For the fire that cannot be extinguished and the worm that does not die represent punishment in the other world (κόλασις αἰώνιος).

Besides Luke 17:2, all other NT occurrences of sulphur associated with fire are in Revelation, and they are all reminiscences of the Sodom episode.<sup>128</sup> The idea of sulphur associated with fire appears only in those passages of the OT and the NT where fire is sent by God and is supernatural: that of Sodom

<sup>125</sup> In fact, Jesus goes on saying: "Salt is a good thing, but if salt becomes tasteless (unsalted), with which will you give it taste? Have salt in yourselves!" Otherwise you will need to be salted in the other world, by the αἰώνιον fire.

<sup>126</sup> For a systematic study of the meaning of αἰώνιος in the Bible see Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, 37–70.

<sup>127</sup> In the parallel passage, Matt 18:8–9 explicitly calls this fire of Gehenna πῦρ αἰώνιον. The eschatological βληθῆναι εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός is very similar to the βληθῆναι εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός in Revelation.

<sup>128</sup> In addition to Rev 20:10 and 21:8, which I have mentioned, in 9:18 fire, fog, and sulphur are described as coming out from the mouths of the horses, and in 14:10 the wicked are said to be tested through fire and sulphur. This eschatological test by means of the divine fire, which is once more reminiscent of the Sodom episode, is very similar to that described in 1 Cor 3:13–15, which is eschatological as well and likewise realised through the divine fire. I have already analysed this passage above.

and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24; Luke 17:29, as a reminiscence of the former), which generally extends to sinners (Ps 10:7, with a clear reminiscence of Gen 19:24). In Revelation it is the lake of fire in which death and hell, the devil, the powers of evil, and sinners will be cast, again as a reminiscence of the fire of Gen 19:24. In all of these cases this is God's fire, sent to purify or destroy: to destroy death and evil and thus purify sinners. It is the divine fire, the fire of the other world (πῦρ αἰώνιον), which was already sent *in antiquo* upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 7) and will be sent again by the Lord to form the eschatological lake of fire.

For what I have been arguing shows that there is a difference between the categories of those who will be cast into the lake of fire: death and hell will disappear in it, and this will be the death of death, also foretold in 1 Cor 15:26: death, the last enemy, will be destroyed—like the powers of evil (v. 24)—, but the others will submit (v. 25): Paul uses two different verbs, καταργέω for the annihilation of death and the powers of evil, and τίθημι ὑπό or ὑποτάσσω for the creatures' submission.<sup>129</sup> In the very same way, according to John, death and hell will be destroyed in the lake of fire, the second death, the death of death; the devil and the powers of evil (the beast, the pseudo-prophet) will be “tested” in it for an indefinitely long period (“ages and ages”); sinners will be cast into the lake of fire as well, but it is not said that they will never emerge from it. This fire may be purifying. The πῦρ αἰώνιον to which the fire of Sodom is assimilated in Jude 7<sup>130</sup> is not “eternal,” but of the other world, sent by God: this is so essential in regard to the fire of Sodom that the name of the Lord is repeated twice in Gen 19:24, to stress that this is the fire sent by the Lord.

A clear proof that, even after the judgment,<sup>131</sup> a therapeutic action will take place in favour of the wicked, evidently those who are still outside the New Jerusalem, is found in Rev 22:2. Here, after the description of the casting of death, hell, the devil and the powers of evil, and then the wicked, into the lake of fire and the depiction of the New Jerusalem,<sup>132</sup> where no sinner can enter but only those who are written in the book of life, it is said that the

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Ramelli, “1 Cor 15,24–26.” On “enemies” in Rev: A.J. Beagley, *The Sitz im Leben of the Apocalypse* (Berlin, 1987).

<sup>130</sup> “Sodom and Gomorrah are a clear example of punishment through divine fire [πρόκεινται δεῖγμα πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην ὑπέχουσαι],” the fire of the other world, supernatural fire.

<sup>131</sup> On the Judgment in Rev 20 see J.W. Mealey, *After Thousand Years* (Sheffield, 1992).

<sup>132</sup> The vision of the heavenly Jerusalem is parallel to that of the harlot and is designated as “the Jerusalem Appendix” by A. Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, 1976), 19. Cf. Ch.H. Giblin, *The Book of Revelation* (Collegeville, 1991), 159.

doors of the heavenly city are permanently open, that it will give light to all peoples (Rev 21:24–25), and that the leaves of the tree of life that is inside it and probably represents both Christ's cross<sup>133</sup> and the tree of Paradise,<sup>134</sup> will serve as a therapy for the nations: εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν, in the Vulgate: *ad sanitatem gentium*, "for the health / salvation of the nations." John is drawing inspiration from Ez 47:12, where it is said that the leaves of the trees that will grow on both banks of the eschatological river "will be like medicine,"<sup>135</sup> but in Revelation the tree is only one, the Cross, and its leaves will heal the ἔθνη. Clearly, those who will still need to be cured at that point are not the saints, who will be already inside the holy city, but those who will be outside: now, outside the gates there will be nobody but the ἔθνη who have been cast into the lake of fire.<sup>136</sup>

This has been often regarded as an inconsistency and a sign of a stratified redaction, according to a theory that began to be widespread among scholars in the second half of the nineteenth century, whereas more recently critics have appropriately stressed the unity of the text.<sup>137</sup> Already in reference

<sup>133</sup> I find that Lupieri, *Commentary*, 354 is right in arguing this. In fact, I observe that there is a whole Patristic tradition behind the identification of the "tree/wood of life" with the cross, e.g. in Didymus, *Comm. in Prov.* 1625BC: "Here, Scripture calls again the Cross 'tree of life.'" A. Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden, 2000) 115 and 134, underlines the association of the tree with the rhythm of the year in its twelve fruits.

<sup>134</sup> See Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology*, 131. The connection between the tree of life (here and in Rev 2:7) and the tree of Paradise, but also Christ himself, was proposed by M. Fletcher, *The Names of Christ*, ed. in *Ashbury Theological Journal* 61 (2006) 13–94: 90–92. The tree of life and the river are interpreted as a vision of ecological renewal by B.R. Rossing, "For the Healing of the World," in *From Every People and Nation*, ed. D. Rhoads (Minneapolis, 2005), Ch. 8.

<sup>135</sup> The massive presence of Ezekiel behind Revelation is analysed in *Das Ezechielbuch in der Johannesoffenbarung*, ed. D. Sängler (Neukirchen/Vluyn, 2006); also S. Bøe, *Gog and Magog* (WUNT 135; Tübingen, 2001).

<sup>136</sup> *Schol. in Ap.* 29 distinguishes the λαός, composed by "pure and wise human beings," from the ἔθνη, composed by the others, "more numerous and less worthy," whom Jesus bought.

<sup>137</sup> E.g. M. Karrer, *Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief* (Göttingen, 1986) sees it as an epistle; U. Vanni, *La struttura letteraria dell'Apocalisse* (Brescia, 1980) considers it to be aimed at liturgy; Lupieri, *Commentary*, 12–13 and *passim*, emphasises the unity of the text: on this basis, he thinks that an allegorical exegesis of it is necessary. This is in line with R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh, 1993), who claims that Revelation was meant to be read at different levels. Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology*, 204 contends that Revelation in its present form is the composition by a single author. She, like most scholars, accepts the dating given by Irenaeus, *AH* 5.30.3: the latter part of Domitian's reign. See Ead., *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia, 1984), 54–83; Ead., "The Book of Revelation," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. J.J. Collins, I (New York, 1998), 384–414. Callahan, "Language," 468–469 considers the author of Revelation a victim of Domitian's persecution,

to Rev 20:3 Lupieri observed the apparent contradiction regarding these ἔθνη who in the course of this book are more than once said to be utterly destroyed, exterminated, and cast into fire, and then appear again: “Despite the massacre that has just ended, there are still ‘nations’ that Satan can lead astray. This is the first of a series of more or less logical problems within the text, problems associated with the ‘nations,’ which always appear to have been completely destroyed, but then reappear unexpectedly.”<sup>138</sup> The same problem is realised by other critics.<sup>139</sup> In fact, the “nations” and “kings of the earth”—the vast portion of humanity associated with Satan<sup>140</sup>— who were destroyed at the end of Ch. 19, and deceived by Satan and cast into the lake of fire at the end of Ch. 20, reappear again not only in Rev 22:2 to be healed by the tree of life, but already in Rev 21:24. Here it is said that “the nations” will walk in the light of the holy Jerusalem—this light is the small Lamb<sup>141</sup>— and will enter its gates, which will be permanently open, and will bring their glory and value into Jerusalem. They will bring the true τιμή into the holy city, that is, they will bring the invaluable worth of humanity<sup>142</sup> to salvation, of course after their due purification. We can maintain the unity of Revelation without difficulty, even in respect to the apparent inconsistencies regarding the ἔθνη that are said to be killed and cast into the second death and then to be healed and enter the new Jerusalem, if we

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like I. Ramelli, “La Satira IV di Giovenale e il supplizio di Giovanni a Roma,” *Gerión* 18 (2000) 343–359. A slight shift afterwards is postulated by J.W. Taeger, *Johanneische Perspektiven*, ed. D.-A. Koch–D. Bienert (Göttingen, 2006), according to whom Revelation, which is due to the “Johannine tradition,” was written at the beginning of the second century and criticises the empire. According to B.R. Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed* (Cambridge, Ma., 2004), Revelation, at the end of the first century, aimed at comforting the oppressed believers by announcing the end of unjust Roman rule. See also L.L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation* (New York, 1990); S. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John* (Oxford, 2001).

<sup>138</sup> Lupieri, *Commentary*, 312–313.

<sup>139</sup> E.g. H. Raguse, *Psychoanalyse und biblische Interpretation* (Stuttgart, 1993), 200–201. R. Herms, *An Apocalypse for the Church and for the World* (Berlin, 2006), Ch. 4 provides an extensive analysis of “the nations” in Revelation. He disagrees with Bauckham, who understands that “the nations” will be saved.

<sup>140</sup> Lupieri, *Commentary*, 287.

<sup>141</sup> The only scholar, to my knowledge, who rightly stresses that ἀρνίον does not mean “lamb,” but “small lamb,” or even “newborn lamb,” in reference to the tiny lambs used in Jerusalem in the daily Temple sacrifice of the *Tamid*, is M.-L. Rigato, *Giovanni: l'enigma il Presbitero il culto il Tempio la cristologia* (Bologna, 2007) 128–178, with review by I. Ramelli, *Review of Biblical Literature* February 2008 [<http://www.bookreviews.org/BookDetail.asp?TitleId=6170>].

<sup>142</sup> Oecumenius, too, in his commentary, 248, interprets the τιμή of the ἔθνη as the persons themselves.

understand the death of these ἔθνη, the second death, as the θάνατος αἰώνιος or κόλασις αἰώνιος, meaning “death/punishment in the other world,” not “eternal death.”<sup>143</sup> The nations’ death or punishment is a purifying suffering: what is eliminated is evil, not people. This is why people can reappear afterwards, receive the healing that comes from the tree/Cross, and finally enjoy dwelling in the holy Jerusalem.

Origen clearly saw this: in *Hom. in Ier.* 1,16 he observes that, when the Scriptures speak of death and destruction of kingdoms and nations (ἔθνη), they do not refer to the realms of this world, nor to the elimination of humans: it is the kingdom of evil that will be destroyed and demolished down to its very roots by God, in order to purify human beings and prepare a basis for a good planting and edification; it is sin, in all its varieties, that will be eradicated, destroyed, and abolished, so that upon the ruins of evil God may build his Temple and plant the garden of Good, the new Paradise. The concept of the final eviction of evil and its substitution with good emerges again in *Hom. in Ier.* 16,6, where the destruction of evil is directly connected to the end of punishment—expressly assimilated to death—for sinners: for God gives death only in order to give life again.<sup>144</sup> Origen’s eschatological theories cannot be uncritically ascribed back to the author of Revelation, but a close analysis of this book itself, and in particular of what it foretells about the eschatological vicissitudes of the ἔθνη, shows what follows. According to what John says about the therapy for the nations, the ἔθνη, who have been punished by means of the θάνατος αἰώνιος, will be cured; the fire itself will be therapeutic for them and the leaves of the tree of life—Christ’s Cross—will heal them. Soon after this verse, indeed, v. 3 adds a quotation from Zach 14:11: “and there will be no more malediction whatsoever [πάν κατάθεμα]” (Vulgate: *et omne maledictum non erit amplius*). Κατάθεμα or ἀνάθεμα is the excommunication, malediction, exclusion, and the excommunicated person at the same time. In Rom 9:3 ἀνάθεμα indicates

<sup>143</sup> See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition. That the ἔθνη will finally convert in Revelation is maintained by R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh, 1963), 238–337.

<sup>144</sup> “First the aspects concerning injustice and sin are presented [sc. in Scripture], then those concerning justification from sin, not the reverse [...] first we shall receive bad things, sufferings, and then good things, so that, thanks to the vanishing of evil, the sufferings of the punishment of those who are enduring them may come to an end, that after this ‘I may give good things.’ Thus, in the holy Scriptures you will find that God first says things that seem to be rather gloomy, and, after these, better things: ‘I shall kill and shall make live; I shall strike, and I shall heal.’ He makes one suffer, and then he restores [ἀποκαθίστησιν] him again.”

the very person who is excluded from the communion with Christ; in 1 Cor 12:3 Paul denies that anyone who is inspired by the Spirit could ever say that Jesus is ἀνάθεμα; in 16:22 ἀνάθεμα designates the person who is excluded from the Christian communion. I have already suggested that the author of Revelation arguably wrote with 1 Corinthians in mind. Likewise, in Gal 1:8–9, whoever proclaims a different Gospel from that proclaimed by Paul is ἀνάθεμα. In Deut 7:26 ἀνάθεμα is the malediction of idolatry and refers to the gold and silver out of which pagan idols were made, which the Israelite was not allowed to bring home, because they were an abomination to God, a malediction.<sup>145</sup> Now, Rev 22:4 foretells that there will be no more malediction, no one who will remain out. Analogously, there will be no darkness, no night any more (22:5), just as there will be no death any more.

The judgment according to each one's works will certainly take place, as it is repeated by Christ in Rev 22:12–15,<sup>146</sup> but those who will have remained outside, as excommunicated from the presence of God, will be purified. These sinners, thanks to purification and therapy, will finally be allowed to pass into Jerusalem: its gates are said to be left perpetually open (Rev 21:25), clearly to allow sinners to get in as they become worthy and pure. For there will be no enemy left outside: no more death, no more evil, no more hell. Precisely in connection with the openness of the city gates, it is said—with a quotation from Isa 60:3–5—that the ἔθνη and the kings of the earth will arrive, obviously from outside, and bring glory inside the city (Rev 21:24–26). In this light, the iteration of the idea that nothing impure, no sinner, can enter the city (Rev 21:8.27; 22:15), but with no specification anywhere that those impure will be so *forever*, does not prevent, but rather implies, that, once purified, those who were sinners and impure can finally be granted access, through doors that are never closed. In fact, in Rev 22:14 Jesus declares blessed those who wash their robes, that is, those who purify themselves:<sup>147</sup> the present participle, πλύνοντες, suggests a continual and

<sup>145</sup> Κατάθεμα in our Revelation passage is the only occurrence of this noun in the NT; the verb καταθεματίζω occurs only in Matt 26:74 when Peter swears, with maledictions, that he does not know Jesus, during his trial (the Vulgate renders: *tunc coepit detestari et iurare quia non novisset hominem*; the parallel, Mark 14:71, has ἀναθεματίζω, which makes it clear that the two verbs were felt as largely equivalent; the verb is retained in the Vulgate: *ille autem coepit anathematizare et iurare quia nescio hominem istum quem dicitis*). In the LXX both terms are absent. Oecumenius too, *Comm. in Ap.* 249, glosses κατάθεμα with ἀνάθεμα, which he associates with impurity and its consequences.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. M. Philonenko, “Dehors les chiens (Apocalypse 22.6 et 4QMMTB58–62),” *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997) 445–450.

<sup>147</sup> Oecumenius, *Comm. in Ap.* 248 and 252–253, interprets the robes as the bodies, the

progressive action, not one that has taken place once and for all in the past; as a consequence, those who are declared blessed by Jesus may be not only those who had already purified themselves in their former life, but also those who will wash their robes in the purifying lake of fire: then, they will be able to enter the holy city through its gates, which are permanently left open, and to profit from the tree of life (ἔσται ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς), the tree whose leaves provide the “therapy for the nations.” *Sch. in Apoc.* 38, which reflects Origen’s point of view, notes that the events narrated all happen “for the sake of the salvation of humanity [ὑπὲρ τοῦ σωζομένου ἀνθρώπου], in order to have its freewill mature toward immortality, and to prepare it for the eternal submission [τὴν εἰς αἰὲ ὑποταγήν]” to God, clearly with an allusion to the *telos* described in 1 Cor 15:24–28, where Origen interprets the submission as salvation.<sup>148</sup>

Indeed, reading the eschatological predictions in Revelation in the light of the eschatological scenario depicted in 1 Cor 15:24–28 (with the destruction of death and the powers of evil and the submission of all creatures to Christ, who will hand all to the Father, so that God will be “all in all”) is not at all unjustified, in that the author of Revelation knew Paul’s eschatological statements in that passage. Origen conflates the Apocalypse and 1 Cor 15:25–28 also in *Comm. in Io.* 2,6,51 and 2,7,54–57. And such a conflation would seem justified on the plane of the NT itself, in that the author of the Apocalypse probably knew 1 Corinthians—although this is not the *communis opinio* among scholars—and repeatedly seems to allude to it. In fact, there are several linguistic and terminological aspects that the author of the Apocalypse shares with Paul.<sup>149</sup> He shows an acquaintance with, and several reminiscences of, Paul’s letters,<sup>150</sup> and above all precisely of

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tree/wood of life as the Lord, and the gates as the teaching of the apostles. He also reads the leaves as the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ecclesiastical shepherds, “and every righteous soul,” who all cure other people’s souls (*ibid.* 249).

<sup>148</sup> See I. Ramelli, “Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 313–356.

<sup>149</sup> See, e.g., Lupieri, *Commentary*, 44.

<sup>150</sup> Excluding the many parallels with Heb, I indicate at least: 2 Cor 5:17 in Rev 21:5 on the passing away of the old and all things being new; 2 Cor 11:2 in 14:4 (moreover, G. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* [Grand Rapids, 1999], 742 remarks that the meaning of ἀπαρχή in this passage is close to that which the word bears in Paul, Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Thess 2:13; on 777 he also cites 1 Cor 15:20.23); 2 Cor 11:14–15 in 2:9; 2 Cor 6:16 in 11:1; Rom 1:28 in 22:15; Rom 2:5 in 6:17 and 11:8 on God’s judgement; Rom 2:6 in 2:23 on the eschatological giving to each one according to his/her deeds; Rom 8:23 in 22:17; Rom 16:20, 24 in 22:21; Phil 4:3 in 3:5; Phil 2:9–10 in 5:13, where Paul’s prophecy of universal submission and thanksgiving to Christ and God is actualised; Phil 4:3 in 20:12 and in 21:27 on the



1 Corinthians.<sup>151</sup> This is in perfect agreement with the thesis of Karrer (followed by other scholars) that the genre of Revelation is epistolary and, what is more, it was inspired by Paul's letters.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, most similarities with, and possibly quotations or echoes of, 1 Corinthians in the Apocalypse come exactly from 1 Cor 15–16. It is significant that probable Pauline echoes especially concentrate in Chapters 19–22 of the Apocalypse (with at least fourteen examples in only four chapters!) and mostly take up Pauline eschato-

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book of life; Eph 2:20 in 21:14 on the eschatological presence of the apostles in the basement of the new Jerusalem; 1 Thess 5:2 in 3:3 and in 16:15; 2 Thess 1:6 in 18:6; 1 Thess 4:16 (on which see now D. Konstan–I. Ramelli, "The Syntax of ἐν Χριστῷ in 1 Thess 4:16," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 [2007] 579–593) in 20:5; 2 Thess 2:7 in 17:5; 2 Thess 3:18 in 22:21; 2 Thess 9:10 in 13:13 and 20:3; 2 Thess 2:12 in 3:10; 2 Tim 4:8 in 2:10. For these and other correspondences one may hypothesise common sources, but the convergences are many and sometimes very close, which rather suggests that the author of the Apocalypse knew Paul's letters, especially Romans and 1 Corinthians, perhaps also Philippians and 1–2 Thessalonians.

<sup>151</sup> 1 Cor 1:32 in Rev 3:19, precisely on therapeutic punishment; 1 Cor 6:2 in 20:4 on the saints' eschatological reign and judgement (the closeness is also noticed by R. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* [Grand Rapids, 1977], 355, Beale, *The Book*, 996–997, and D. Aune, *Revelation 17–22* [Nashville, 1998], 956 on Rev 17:14; 1 Cor 1:2–3 is the only non-apocalyptic text in which the righteous act as agents of divine retribution); 1 Cor 6:9–10 in 22:15 on the sins that keep people away from beatitude (this parallel is also noticed by Mounce, *The Book*, 394 n. 16: the list of those who cannot enter the heavenly Jerusalem, who reappear in Rev 21:8, corresponds to the kind of people who will not inherit the Kingdom in 1 Cor 6:9–10); 1 Cor 10:20 in 9:20 (a correspondence also observed by Beale, *The Book*, 519, who assimilates the claim that the idols are demonic forces in v. 20 to 1 Cor 10:20 and the claim that faith in idols is vain because nothing is behind them to 1 Cor 8:4); 1 Cor 14:32 in 22:6 (this verbal and exclusive correspondence, "spirits of the prophets," *unique* in the whole of Scripture, is also noted by Beale, *The Book*, 1126: the Pauline passage is the only other attestation in all of the Bible); 1 Cor 15:23 in 20:5 on the order of resurrection (Mounce, *The Book*, 313 notices that in Rev 17:8 the verb used to describe the coming of the beast is closely related to the noun which regularly describes Christ's *parousia*: 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19); 1 Cor 15:26 and 55 in 20:14 on the destruction of death (this is also realised by Aune, *Revelation*, 1103 on Rev 20:14a: "it could be a way of referring to the eschatological elimination of death: cf. Rev 21:4; 1 Cor 15:26" and by Mounce, *The Book*, 367); 1 Cor 15:58 in 14:13 about the eschatological reward of the labours and works (with the same terminology in both passages) of the good; 1 Cor 16:22 in 22:20 with the same invocation of the eschatological coming of Christ. R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1920), 149 n. 1, compares the proclamation of the eternal Gospel in Rev 14:6–7 with 1 Cor 15:23–28: "a somewhat analogous expectation." Mounce, *The Book*, 204 compares Rev 9:20 with 1 Cor 10:20: "Paul writes that the Gentiles sacrifice to demons and not to God."

<sup>152</sup> Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 66–83 on the influence of early Christian epistolary production and particularly the Pauline tradition. Richard Bauckham describes the whole of Revelation as a circular letter to seven specific churches (*The Theology of the Book of Revelation* [Cambridge, 1993]) and M.E. Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville, 1989) defines it a pastoral letter of a Christian prophet located in the Pauline tradition, not so much, however, because it imitates Paul, but because it stems from the same needs as Paul's.

logical motives. The very ending of the Apocalypse, Rev 22:20–21, contains four echoes from Paul: ἔρχου Κύριε Ἰησοῦ (Rev 22:20) translates Μαράν ἀθά (1Cor 16:22),<sup>153</sup> and Rev 22:21 gathers the greeting formulas of 2 Thess 3:18, Rom 16:20, and Rom 16:24.<sup>154</sup> Thomas Hieke and Tobias Nicklas<sup>155</sup> have analysed OT references in this section, divided into segments (Rev 22:6–7, 8–9, 10–16, 17–21), showing how the richest references concern the Alpha and Omega, as they refer to Genesis and Rev 1:8. Their conclusion is that Rev 22:6–21, far from being a marginal text, is a keystone, qua conclusion not only of this book, but also of the Bible. Hence the numerous quotations from Genesis and other Biblical passages. On this hypothesis, I suggest, the author could well have intended to insert many key references to Paul's letters as the core of the new Christian writings after the ancient Scripture and in continuity with it.<sup>156</sup>

Moreover, strong arguments come from inside Revelation itself. For the final appeal in it is clearly an appeal to inclusion: "Whoever is thirsty, come! Whoever desires, take the water of life as a gift!" (Rev 22:17). And in Rev 22:3 it is overtly stated that there will be no more exclusion or malediction. The dialectic of inclusion and exclusion, expressed in Rev 21:8 and 22:15, is dynamic and will be overcome in the end. In the *telos*, only death and hell and the powers of evil will remain excluded, or rather will be annihilated and no longer exist. The others, God's creatures, either will have immediate access to the holy city, in the case of the saints, or will be progressively purified and will finally enter the glorious Jerusalem. On a reading along these

<sup>153</sup> This parallel is noticed by many commentators. See, e.g., Charles, *Commentary*, 226; Mounce, *The Book*, 396: Rev 22:20 is "the equivalent of the transliterated Aramaic in 1Cor 16:22: *maranatha*"; Vanni, *La struttura*, 109–115; 298–302 considers the end of Revelation to reflect liturgical dialogues, like 1Cor 16:20–24; Aune, *Revelation*, 1206–1209, besides remarking upon the *maranatha* parallel, also argues that the first final curse against those who dared alter Revelation is "a virtual quotation of a pronouncement made by Paul earlier in the setting of Christian worship (see Betz, *Galatians*, 50). Paul pronounced these conditional curses in the introduction of Galatians in order to protect the integrity of the oral gospel, just as John pronounced a double curse at the conclusion of Revelation on anyone who dared alter the written prophecy he had composed" (emphasis mine). See also Beale, *The Book*, 1154–1155, who indicates correspondences with Gal 3:15, 1Cor 11:27–32, and 16:2, 16:20–22.

<sup>154</sup> Rom 16:24 is present only in a part of the ms. tradition.

<sup>155</sup> "Die Worte der Prophetie dieses Buches." *Offenbarung 22, 6–21 als Schlussstein der christlichen Bibel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2003).

<sup>156</sup> A relationship between the Apocalypse and Paul is also contemplated by Th. Stylianos, "I Know Your Works," in *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity*, ed. R.J. Daly (Grand Rapids, 2009), 17–32. And the presence of apocalyptic themes in Paul is highlighted by D. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God* (Grand Rapids, 2010), *praes.* 469–761.

lines, Revelation is perfectly compatible with the doctrine of apokatastasis and even represents a strong endorsement of it. This is why Origen—unlike other Origenian authors who countered millenarian ideas—had no problems in accepting its authenticity and inspiration, provided that it was read allegorically.<sup>157</sup>

*The So-Called Apostolic Fathers and Apologists:  
Apokatastasis in Theophilus*

In the group of writings stemming from the second century CE and collectively labelled “Apostolic Fathers,” the doctrine of apokatastasis as eschatological universal restoration appears to be missing. Interesting hints, however, emerge from Ignatius of Antioch. In his *Letter to Christians in Smyrna*, § 2 of the middle recension, the salvation of all humans is mentioned as an effect of the work of Christ: “The Logos, when his flesh was lifted up like the bronze serpent in the desert, *attracted all human beings* to himself, for their *eternal salvation*.” This text clearly echoes Jesus’s words in John 12:32: “when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall attract *all people* [τοὺς πάντας] to myself.” The middle recension, even of Ignatius’s authentic letters, is often considered to include fourth-century interpolations—although it might be authentic, while the short recension might be a compendium.<sup>158</sup> The insis-

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<sup>157</sup> Herbert W. Armstrong (†1986), the founder of the Worldwide Church of God, first in Oregon and then in California, reconciled Revelation with eschatological universalism in a different manner. In *Mystery of the Ages* (Dodd, Mead 1985), 352–354, he understands that, after the first resurrection, those who died as nonbelievers and whose souls were, in a way, in deep slumber, will be awoken in a second resurrection and have the opportunity to adhere to God; almost all will do so. The others will utterly cease to exist in a third resurrection, which will be the “second death” of which Revelation speaks. His is a “semi-universalism.” Christopher Marshall studied the concept of punishment in the NT and argued that this looks beyond retribution, at an idea of justice that can be satisfied only by the radical eviction of evil and the healing of its victims, by means of sinners’ repentance and the restoration of peace. This justice manifests God’s redemptive work of “making all things new” (*Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* [Grand Rapids, 2001], 284).

<sup>158</sup> Cf. W.R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1985); Idem, “Polycarpus of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch,” in *ANRW* II,27,1 (1993), 272–358; C. Munier, “Où en est la question d’Ignace d’Antioche?,” *ibid.* 359–484; T. Lechner, *Ignatius adversus Valentinianos?* (Leiden, 1999); *The Apostolic Fathers*, I, ed. B.D. Ehrman (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 203–321; J. Rius-Camps, *Ignasi d’Antioquia* (Barcelona, 2001), with bibliography (87–88; 99–104: he regards *Ep. ad Smyrn.* as the second part of *Ep. ad Eph.*); P. Nautin, “Ignazio d’Antiochia,” in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico*, ed. A. Di Berardino, vol. 2 (Genoa, 2007), 2514–2516 also with bibliography; A. Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch* (London–New York, 2007; repr. 2009),

tence on the notion of Jesus who drags all humans to himself for the sake of their eternal salvation would remain remarkable even if it were expressed in a later recension. In any case, in the short recension itself, interesting elements appear. Origen (*Hom. in Luc.* 6,4; *De or.* 20; *In Cant.* preface) and Eusebius (*HE* 3,36) were acquainted with Ignatius's letters, which were preserved in the Caesarea library.<sup>159</sup> Origen in particular could draw inspiration from the earlier recension. In *Ep. ad Eph.* 20 Ignatius describes the destruction of evilness and salvation brought about by Christ, in strongly universalistic terms:

Every spell of evilness has been destroyed, every chain of evilness has disappeared; ignorance has been swept away; the old kingdom has fallen into ruin, when God appeared in human form for the novelty of the life that is absolutely eternal [ἄϊδιου]. What was established by God has begun: since then, all beings have been set in motion for the providential realisation of the destruction of death [διὰ τὸ μελετᾶσθαι θανάτου κατάλυσιν].

This destruction of death is a work of God, and the death at stake is not only physical, but also spiritual, since its disappearance is linked to the elimination of evil and ignorance. In *Ep. ad Thrall.* 2 Ignatius likewise observes: "Christ died for us, that you may *avoid death*, by believing in his death." Again, the death that is avoided is clearly not physical, but spiritual: it is the death in the other world, the death of those who are away from God. Christ "suffered for us, for the sake of our salvation" (*Ep. ad Smyrn.* 2) and has "accomplished every justice," which means the justification of all people (*ibid.* 1,1); he has suffered "for the sake of our sins," meaning for their purification (*ibid.* 7). Ignatius assures his hearers that "nothing will be lost for you" (*ibid.* 11). In *Ep. ad Pol.* 1 he exhorts Polycarp of Smyrna to "urge all people to be saved." And in *Ep. ad Smyrn.* 6,1 he includes in these "all" even angels: those who believe in the blood of Christ will not be judged, but the others will have to be judged.

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who bases himself on the middle recension. See also Id., *Ignatius of Antioch and the Second Sophistic* (Tübingen, 2006), esp. Ch. 2, with a refutation of Hübner's and Lechner's theory of a late-second-century forgery, and Ch. 5, in which Ignatius's insistence on ὁμόνοια is read against the background of the Second Sophistic. T. Barnes, "The Date of Ignatius," *The Expository Times* 120 (2008) 119–130, dated Ignatius later than the reign of Trajan.

<sup>159</sup> A. Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Leiden, 2003), 215–217; in his final list of the works preserved in that library Carriker includes Ignatius's letters as number 43. If an anti-Marcionite drift is to be perceived in Ignatius's letters (on which question see H.J. Herrmann, "Sind die Ignatius-Briefe antimarkionitisch beeinflusst?," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 181 [2001] 1–19), Origen and Eusebius surely appreciated it.

Justin Martyr, a Christian Platonist<sup>160</sup> who ran a philosophical school in Rome, around mid second century,<sup>161</sup> has some interesting universalistic statements in relation to the notion of apokatastasis, and it is probable that Origen knew them. Indeed, Justin's works, including his apologies and *Dialogue with Trypho*, were in the library of Caesarea.<sup>162</sup> Justin states that Christ's crucifixion "has brought about salvation to those who had been bitten by the serpent," that is, all humans (*Dial.* 91). He emphasises that Christ, "a powerful sword," has put to death the ancient serpent. And in *Dial.* 134,4 he employs the very word ἀποκατάστασις in a soteriological context. He presents it as the result of Christ's salvific action, explaining that, while Noah subjected Cham's descendants to his two other children, Christ with his sacrifice has liberated all:

Now, Christ has come for the restoration [εἰς ἀποκατάστασιν] of both the free children and the slaves among them, deeming all [πάντας] worthy of the same rights, those who observe his commandments, just as both those who were born free and those who were born from slaves are all [πάντες] children of Jacob and endowed with equal dignity.

In Justin there is no affirmation of an eventual universal salvation, but there is the language of apokatastasis and its application to an eschatological context, moreover with strongly inclusive elements.

Justin's disciple, Tatian, in the advanced second century,<sup>163</sup> also presents an interesting linguistic and conceptual point. He uses twice the notion "to restore human beings to their original condition." In the one case, the

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<sup>160</sup> See C. Andresen, "Justin und der mittlere Platonismus," in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 44 (1952/3) 157–198; J.C.M. van Winden, *An Early Christian Philosopher: Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho Chapters One to Nine*, Philosophia Patrum 1 (Leiden, 1971); M.J. Edwards, "On the Platonic Schooling of Justin Martyr," *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991) 17–34; Id., "Justin's Logos and the Word of God," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995) 261–280, who insists also on the Biblical roots of Justin's doctrine of the Logos, without denying Justin's knowledge of Platonism and Stoicism; my "San Giustino Martire: il multi-forme uso di *mysterion* e il lessico dell'esegesi tipologica delle Scritture," in *Il volto del mistero*, ed. A.M. Mazzanti (Castel Bolognese, 2006), 35–66.

<sup>161</sup> See at least *Justin. Apologie pour les Chrétiens*, par Ch. Munier, SC 507 (Paris, 2006). For a new edition, with English tr., essay, and commentary, see D. Minns–P. Parvis, eds., *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr. Apologies*, (Oxford, 2009). Here the text of the two apologies is reconstructed in a way (with a displacement of a section from the one to the other) that is very different from the traditional. Some have argued that the two extant apologies are in fact one and a single work and what Eusebius calls second apology is lost (B. Pouderon, "Une œuvre fantôme," *Rivista di Storia del Cristianesimo* 5 [2008] 451–472).

<sup>162</sup> See Carriker, *The Library*, 220–223.

<sup>163</sup> I limit myself to referring now to *Tatianus Oratio ad Graecos*, Hrsg. J. Trelenberg (Tübingen, 2011).

context is eschatological; in the other, it is not, but the occurrence is equally interesting for the relationship it draws between apokatastasis and liberation from evil. The eschatological concept of apokatastasis emerges in *Or.* 6,4,5, in which the expression “to restore into the original condition” (πρὸς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαθίστημι) refers to the resurrection:

And even in case fire should have completely destroyed my poor flesh, the world preserves my matter even if it has evaporated; even in case I have been consumed in rivers and the sea, or I have been devoured by wild beasts, I am kept in the strongbox of a rich Lord. The poor atheist does not know what is stored therein, but God the sovereign, when he wants, will restore the substance visible only to him into its original condition [ἀποκαταστήσει πρὸς τὸ ἀρχαῖον].

The idea of resurrection as restoration, in a holistic view, will be particularly developed by Origen and, even more, Gregory of Nyssa. In *Or.* 18,6,8 Tatian uses again the very same expression that will be employed by Origen and Gregory in reference to the eventual apokatastasis: εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαθίστημι. This idea of “restoration of humans into their original condition” refers to the liberation of humans from the powers of evil. These, by abandoning the persons whom they inhabited, restore these human beings into their original state: τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαθιστῶσι. Although here there is no question of eschatology, the notion of apokatastasis is tantamount to that of liberation from evil. This characterisation of liberation from evil will be applied by Origen, Nyssen, Evagrius, and others to the final apokatastasis, which will take place after the radical elimination of all traces of evil.

Theophilus of Antioch provides the most interesting development, in that he employs ἀποκατάστασις in the context of the description of the eventual universal restoration, in addition to using ἀποκαθίστημι in reference to the return of the Hebrews to their promised Land (ἀπεκατέστησεν εἰς τὴν Χαναναίαν γῆν, *Aut.* 3,9), which interestingly is also read by him as a symbol of Paradise. In *Aut.* 2,17 Theophilus foretells the final restoration of both humans and animals to their original condition, after the disappearance of evil.

[Animals] were not created evil or venomous at the beginning, because from the beginning no evil came from God, but everything was good and very good. It was human sin that made them evil; when the human being transgressed, they too transgressed. Therefore, when humanity *returns to the condition that is according to its nature* [ὅποτεν οὖν πάλιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀναδράμη εἰς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν], and will *no longer do evil* [μηκέτι κακοποιῶν], animals too will be *restored* into their original meekness [κἀκεῖνα ἀποκατασταθήσεται εἰς τὴν ἀρχήθεν ἡμερότητα].

Theophilus expresses here a notion of apokatastasis that is both eschatological and universal—even including animals—and moreover depends on the eventual elimination of evil. All these characteristics will be at work in the concept of apokatastasis typical of Origen, Gregory Nyssen, Evagrius, etc. Origen will be interested in the apokatastasis especially of rational creatures, but other thinkers, such as Gregory of Nyssa, will emphasise also the general restoration of all creation. Also, Theophilus at the same time interprets beasts as the symbol of evil human beings,<sup>164</sup> as it is the case with Origen and probably also the *Acts of Philip*.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, the strategy of looking at what happened in the ἀρχή in order to establish how the τέλος will be, as Theophilus does in the block quotation, is abundantly used by Origen, too. Moreover, in another eloquent passage (ibid. 2,26) Theophilus presents the same notion of physical death and removal from Paradise as a gift from God to humanity aimed at avoiding its eternal sin and condemnation, as Irenaeus, Methodius, and Gregory of Nyssa do.<sup>166</sup> Methodius and Gregory were supporters of apokatastasis, and certainly what Theophilus here expounds is in full agreement with this theory:

God manifested a great goodness to the human being in that he did not want it to continue to *be in sin forever*, but, as through a sort of banishment, chased it away from Paradise, so that it might expiate its sin through chastisement *within the limit of an established time*, be educated in this way, and then *be called back*.

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<sup>164</sup> “Four-legged animals and ferocious beasts became the symbol of some human beings who do not know God, are impious, only think of earthly things, and do not convert [...] People like this are merely *called* human beings, but in fact their thoughts are all mundane and stick to the earth; they are burdened by sins, which press them down.”

<sup>165</sup> On these see I. Ramelli, “Mansuetudine, grazia e salvezza negli *Acta Philippi*,” *Invigilata Lucernis* 29 (2007) 215–228. On animals as symbols of evildoers in Origen there are many examples: e.g., *Hom. 3 in Ps. 36, 4: Cum vero contraria potestas fera et nequam perurget hominem et infidelis est per quem insidiatur, si potuerit fundere sanguinem animae tuae, id est deicere te in peccatum, bestia est de qua exquirat Dominus sanguinem tuum*. That the context is all spiritual is also indicated by the previous reference to the death of the soul, which is not an ontological destruction, but is due to sin: *cum autem peccaverit, trucidatus est et sanguis animae eius profluit*. Another example comes from *Hom. in Luc. 8*: “we create our images in ourselves instead of that of the Saviour [...] if we are venomous, cruel, or deceitful, we have assumed the character of the lion, the serpent, or the fox [...] one is similar to birds, another one to reptiles or serpents.” Sinners are assimilated not only to animals, but even to stones, especially idolaters: “they adored stones or wood [...] they *become stones or wood*, without perception, without reason. [...] they see the world only with the eyes with which irrational animals and beasts see it” (ibid. 22). See also *Hom. in Gen. 2,3* (cf. 10,2; 12,5).

<sup>166</sup> See in this chapter the section on Irenaeus and, below in the next chapters, those on Methodius and Gregory Nyssen.

*The Apocalypse of Peter and Other Texts  
Pointing to the Eschatological Liberation of People from Hell*

There are some early Christian so-called “apocrypha”<sup>167</sup> that do not have the terminology of apokatastasis, but do display ideas that represent important premises of this doctrine. At least some of these works did not escape the knowledge and attention of supporters of the apokatastasis theory such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who very likely drew inspiration from them, too, for their doctrine. The *Apocalypse of Peter*<sup>168</sup> is an ancient text,<sup>169</sup> which might represent an oral tradition independent of those of the canonical Gospels.<sup>170</sup> It probably stems from Alexandria or Egypt,<sup>171</sup> toward 135 CE (it seems to allude to Bar Kochba).<sup>172</sup> It is included in second-century

<sup>167</sup> See F. Bovon, *Les actes apocryphes des Apôtres, Christianisme et monde païen* (Genève, 1981); Idem, *Révélation et écritures: Nouveau Testament et littérature apocryphe chrétienne: recueil d'articles* (Genève, 1993); Id., *Studies in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, 2003), with essays devoted to the “Apocryphal Acts,” which indicate the great interest in the apostles in early Christianity; *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: Harvard Divinity School Studies*, eds. F. Bovon–A.G. Brock–C.R. Matthews (Cambridge, Ma. 1999); I. Ramelli, *Atti di Mar Mari* (Brescia, 2008), with the reviews by J. Perkins, *Aevum* 83 (2009) 269–271, and S.P. Brock, *Ancient Narrative* 7 (2008) 123–130 [www.ancientnarrative.com; also available at www.thefreelibrary.com/I.+Ramelli:+Atti+di+Mar+Mari.-a0197420329 and www.bibbiablog.com/2008/04/05/atti-di-mar-mari/]; I. Ramelli, *Possible Historical Traces in the Doctrina Addai?* (Piscataway, 2009); Eadem, “The Narrative Continuity between the *Teaching of Addai* and the *Acts of Mari*: Two Historical Novels?,” in *Narratives of Egypt and the Ancient Near East. Literary and Linguistic Approaches*, eds. F. Hagen et al., Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 189 (Leuven, 2009), 411–450; Ead., “The Biography of Addai: Its Development Between Fictionality and Historicity,” *Phrasis* 51 (2010) 83–105.

<sup>168</sup> See D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened* (Atlanta, 1988); R. Bauckham, “The Apocalypse of Peter,” *Apocrypha* 5 (1994) 7–111; Id., *The Fate of the Dead* (Leiden, 1998); Id., “Jews and Jewish Christians in the Land of Israel at the Time of the Bar Kochba War,” in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, eds. G.N. Stanton–G. Stroumsa (Cambridge, 1998), 228–238; *The Apocalypse of Peter*, eds. J. Bremmer–I. Czachesz (Leuven, 2003), *praes.* K. Copeland, “Sinners and *Post-Mortem* ‘Baptism’ in the Acherusian Lake,” 92–107; *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrusapokalypse*, Hrsg. Th. Kraus–T. Nicklas (Berlin, 2004), with edition of the Rainer fragment.

<sup>169</sup> Its Christology is archaic; for Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 388–398, “perhaps the most ancient of all.”

<sup>170</sup> See E. Norelli, “Apocri fi cristiani antichi,” in *Dizionario di omiletica*, eds. M. Sodi–A. Triacca (Turin, 1998), 102–111.

<sup>171</sup> J. Bremmer, “The *Apocalypse of Peter*: Greek or Jewish?” in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, 1–14.

<sup>172</sup> That the *Apocalypse of Peter* refers to Bar Kochba is accepted, e.g., by Bauckham, *The Fate*, 160–161; P. Marrassini, “L’Apocalisse di Pietro,” in *Etiopia e oltre*, ed. Y. Beyene (Naples, 1994), 171–232; E. Norelli, “Pertinence théologique et canonicité,” *Apocrypha* 8 (1997) 147–164, *praes.* 157; A. Jakab, “The Reception of the *Apocalypse of Peter* in Ancient Christianity,” in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, 174–186, *praes.* 174; J. Bolyki, “False Prophets in the *Apocalypse of Peter*,” *ibid.* 52–62. Contrast E. Tigchelaar, “Is the Liar Bar Kochba?” *ibid.* 63–77.



Muratorian Canon<sup>173</sup> and in Codex Claromontanus (55 Westcott).<sup>174</sup> Its terminology is Judaic, which becomes a document connected with the Petrine tradition<sup>175</sup> related to the Egyptian tradition of Mark.<sup>176</sup> Clement—as well as Origen and Porphyry<sup>177</sup>—knew the *Apocalypse of Peter* and regarded it as inspired. This is why he commented on it in his *Hypotyposeis* (Eus. *HE* 6,14,1). In *Ecl. Proph.* 48 he quotes a passage from this *Apocalypse* ascribing it to Peter himself, and *ibid.* 41 he even quotes another section attributing it to “Scripture.” Besides finding there the earliest description of the torments of hell, often characterised by “mirror punishments,”<sup>178</sup> what did Clement—and other ancient readers—find in what he regarded as such an authoritative text, in relation to the doctrine of apokatastasis? Essentially the follow-

<sup>173</sup> This fragment was discovered by L.A. Muratori in 1740 in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, in a seventh/eight-century ms. The canon that it contains includes the *Apocalypse of Peter* immediately before the *Shepherd of Hermas*, with the remark *quam quidam ex nostris legi in ecclesia nolunt*. This implies that the other Christians regularly read it in a liturgical context. See at least E. Ferguson, “Canon Muratori. Date and Provenance,” in *Studia Patristica* 17,2 (1982) 677–683; Ph. Henne, “La datation du Canon de Muratori,” *Revue Biblique* 100 (1993) 54–75; G.M. Hahneman, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (Oxford, 1992). H.Y. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon* (Philadelphia, 1985); D.G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon* (Tübingen, 1986); B.M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford, 1987); G. Hall, “Canon and Controversies,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40 (1989) 253–261; F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Glasgow, 1988); P. Grelot, “La tradition apostolique,” *Revue Biblique* 99 (1992) 163–204; H. Koester, “Writings and the Spirit,” *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991) 353–372; Y.-M. Blanchard, *Aux sources du Canon* (Paris, 1993); T. Ziegler, “Un regard neuf sur la formation du canon,” *Revue d'Histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 71 (1991) 45–59; *Le canon des Écritures*, ed. C. Theobald (Paris, 1990); *La formation des canons scripturaires*, éd. M. Tardieu (Paris, 1993); L.M. McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon* (Peabody, Ma. 1995); *Die Einheit der Schrift und die Vielfalt des Kanons*, eds. J. Barton–M. Wolter (Berlin, 2003).

<sup>174</sup> In the stichometry of Codex Claromontanus, a third-century catalogue of the length of Biblical books, the *Apocalypse of Peter* is included with 270 στίχοι. A ninth-century stichometry of the whole Bible is included in Nicephorus's Chronography. Here, both the OT and the NT are followed by lists of contested writings (ἀντιλεγόμενα) and apocrypha (ἀπόκρυφα). The *Apocalypse of Peter* is listed among the former and is given about 300 στίχοι.

<sup>175</sup> Petrine themes are highlighted by E. Norelli, “Situation des apocryphes pétriniens,” *Apocrypha* 2 (1991) 31–38, in three Petrine texts: the *Apocalypse* and *Gospel of Peter* and the *Kerygmata Petri*.

<sup>176</sup> See my “The Birth of the Rome-Alexandria Connection: The Early Sources on Mark and Philo, and the Petrine Tradition,” *The Studia Philonica Annual* 23 (2011) 69–95.

<sup>177</sup> Porphyry, or a polemicist inspired by him, *ap. Mac. Magn. Apocr.* 4,6 not only proves to know the *Apocalypse of Peter*, but also to regard it as a part of the Christian Bible, to be criticised along with the Gospels, Paul, etc.

<sup>178</sup> This kind of punishments will find their most vivid expression in Dante's *Inferno*. For a possible explanation of their meaning in the *Apocalypse of Peter* see C. Callon, “Sorcery, Wheels, and Mirror Punishments in the *Apocalypse of Peter*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 (2010) 29–49.

ing concept: after a period of suffering in the afterlife, sinners too will finally attain beatitude, thanks to their post-mortem conversion and the intercession of the blessed (the “righteous”) for them. In the Ethiopic translation, which constitutes the widest recension available of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, Christ affirms:

Then I shall give to those who belong to me, the elect and justified, the bath and the salvation for which they have implored me, in the Acherusian valley, called Elysian Fields, and I shall go and rejoice together with them. I shall have the peoples enter my eternal Kingdom, and I shall do for them what I and my heavenly Father had promised them.<sup>179</sup>

The last sentence contains a rather obscure allusion to the salvation of the damned. But the parallel Rainer fragment, in Greek, which is much more ancient (third century),<sup>180</sup> is far more explicit regarding the eventual salvation of the damned:

I shall grant to my summoned and elect all those whom they ask me to remove from punishment [παρήσομαι ὃν ἀν αἰτήσονται με ἐκ τῆς κολάσεως]. And I shall grant them a beautiful baptism in salvation [ἐν σωτηρίᾳ] in the Acherusian Lake, which is said to be in the Elysian valley, a sharing of justification [μέρος δικαιοσύνης] with my saints. And I and my elect will go and rejoice together with the Patriarchs in my eternal Kingdom, and with them I shall keep my promises, made by me and by my Father who is in heaven.<sup>181</sup>

It is meaningful that the Ethiopic passage underwent modifications aimed at eliminating the reference to the salvation of the damned.<sup>182</sup> But even in the late Ethiopic recension, although some passages mention an “eternal” punishment (the Ethiopic “eternal,” however, renders the underlying Greek

<sup>179</sup> Ethiopic text from Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 224–230.

<sup>180</sup> See M.R. James, “The Rainer Fragment of the *Apocalypse of Peter*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (1931) 270–279; Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 152–155; J.K. Elliott, “The *Apocalypse of Peter*,” in *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1993), 593–613; R. Bauckham, “The *Apocalypse of Peter*: An Account of Research,” in *ANRW* 2,25,6 (1988) 4713–4750; Id., “The Conflict of Justice and Mercy,” in Idem, *The Fate of the Dead*, 132–148.

<sup>181</sup> See Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 228 and 345; Elliott, “*Apocalypse of Peter*,” 609; James, “Rainer Fragment,” 271 for the Greek text. This section corresponds to Ch. 14 in the Ethiopic text, whereas the section is completely lacking in the Akhmîm fragment, which suggests that it belongs to a different recension. A comparison between the Rainer fragment and the Ethiopic is provided by Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 344–662. According to James, “Rainer Fragment,” 278, the Rainer and the Bodleian fragments of this *Apocalypse* originally belonged not only to the same recension, but even to the same ms.

<sup>182</sup> Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 348; L.R. Lanzillotta, “Does Punishment Reward the Righteous? The Justice Pattern Underlying the *Apocalypse of Peter*,” in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, 127–157, *praes.* 151–152.

αἰώνιος,<sup>183</sup> which in biblical terminology never means “eternal” unless it refers to God), in Ch. 14 Jesus clearly announces the eventual salvation of the damned. Already in Chs. 3–4 Peter pities the damned, but Jesus replies that God has even more mercy than Peter, and adds that “there is nothing that perishes for God, nothing that is impossible for him” (4,5). This is the same argument by which Origen will correct Plato in order to assert the universality of salvation.<sup>184</sup> In Ch. 14 it is declared that Jesus will extract the damned from the torments. The Ethiopic translation of the *Apocalypse of Peter* is embedded in the Ethiopic version of the so-called Pseudo-Clementines,<sup>185</sup> in a section of which Peter and Jesus discuss the eschatological destiny of sinners, whose final salvation after a period of torments is envisaged.<sup>186</sup> Jesus observes that sinners will not repent if the threat of eternal damnation is removed (140ra). God and Christ will have compassion for all of their creatures (140rb) and Jesus will destroy the devil and punish sinners (140vb–141vb). But he adds, addressing Peter: “You will have no more mercy on sinners than I do, for I was crucified because of them, in order to obtain mercy for them from my Father.” The Lord will therefore give each of them “life, glory, and kingdom without end,” since Jesus will intercede for them. But this outcome must not be made known, to avoid an upsurge in sin (141vb–142bv). This profoundly worried Origen as well.<sup>187</sup> Peter reports this dialogue of his with Jesus to Clement, in the frame of the Pseudo-Clementines, recommending secrecy in turn, since the doctrine of apokatastasis might foment sin in immature people. Indeed, in the continu-

<sup>183</sup> E.g. the Ethiopic “eternal Kingdom” (14,2) translates αἰώνια βασιλεία, which is confirmed by the Rainer fragment.

<sup>184</sup> See my “The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception in Platonism, Pagan and Christian: Origen in Dialogue with the Stoics and Plato,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18 (2011) 335–371, and below in this same chapter, the section on Origen.

<sup>185</sup> See Buchholz, *Your Eyes*; M. Pesthy, “Thy Mercy, O Lord, is in the Heavens,” in *The Apocalypse of Peter*, 40–51, on the Ps. Clementine *Second Coming of Christ and Resurrection of the Dead*. This and the Ps. Clementine text that follows it, *The Mystery of the Judgment of Sinners*, are regarded as Origenistic by G. Lusini, “Tradizione origeniana in Etiopia,” in *Origeniana VIII*, 1177–1184. These two texts form a diptych: see R. Cowley, “The Ethiopic Work which is Believed to Contain the Material of the Ancient Greek *Apocalypse of Peter*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 36 (1985) 151–153. As for the Ps. Clementine *Recognitiones* I just refer to N. Kelley, *Knowledge and Religious Authority in the Pseudo-Clementines* (Tübingen, 2006).

<sup>186</sup> See Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 376–381.

<sup>187</sup> M. Scott, “Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 (2010) 347–368 rightly insists on Origen’s prudence in disclosing the apokatastasis doctrine to the simple, to the point that some have believed—albeit incorrectly so—that Origen was uncertain himself between eschatological universalism and its opposite. See T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation: Restoring Particularity* (Oxford, 2009).

ation (146v–157v), which consists in the treatise *On the Judgment of Sinners*, Peter, reporting to Clement the revelations received from Jesus, states:

The Lord has not created Adam for the sake of punishment and correction, but for happiness and joy. Since Adam transgressed God's commandment, death follows his life like darkness does light [...] The Lord said to Adam: "You are dust" [...] Now, after resurrecting him, will God destroy Adam again with death and hell? After punishing him in a way that is *proportional to his crime*, will the Lord destroy him again? Reflect and understand that God *will not have Adam die again*.

And this discourse must remain a *mystery* for every human being, just as the preceding one.

Also, the presence of the motif of Christ's *descensus ad inferos* in other texts of the Petrine tradition, such as 1 Peter and the *Gospel of Peter*, makes it more probable that it was present in the *Apocalypse of Peter* as well. Clement and Origen, who very much insisted on the motif of Christ's descent to hell, were familiar with this *Apocalypse*. But another element supports the presence of the *descensus ad inferos* motif in the *Apocalypse of Peter*. At mid fifth century, Sozomen *HE* 7,9 attests that still in his day in some churches in Palestine the *Apocalypse of Peter* was read every year, "once a year, on the day of Παρασκευή (Good Friday), when they fast with great devotion to commemorate the Saviour's Passion." Sozomen is a reliable, local source, and his remark suggests that the *Apocalypse of Peter* was read on that day for a reference to Christ's descent to hell between the afternoon of Friday and the evening of Saturday. Another element in the *Apocalypse of Peter* that is relevant to the formation of the doctrine of apokatastasis is the notion of the possibility of a spiritual growth and improvement even after death. This is especially the case with babies who died and will be reared by angels in the other world (*ap.* Clement *Ecl. proph.* 41 and 48). This testifies to a dynamic conception of the otherworldly condition, which returns in Clement, Origen, and Gregory Nyssen.

The concept that I have pointed out in the Rainer fragment of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, i.e. the intercession of the righteous for sinners in an eschatological context, returns in a similar fashion in another "apocryphal" text that stems from the Egyptian region, probably from the second or third century CE: the Coptic *Apocalypse of Elijah*.<sup>188</sup> That this *Apocalypse* was based on that of Peter was supposed by James, whose hypothesis was accepted

<sup>188</sup> See D. Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt* (Minneapolis, 1997); E. Lupieri, "Escatologia nel Giudaismo apocalittico," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 16 (1999) 35–43.

by Buchholz.<sup>189</sup> This is the relevant passage in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*: “The righteous will contemplate sinners in their sufferings, and those who have persecuted, betrayed, or handed them [to hostile people]” (23,11–24,12); then sinners “will contemplate the place where the righteous will be living, and will take part in Grace. On that day the righteous will be granted that for which they will often have prayed,”<sup>190</sup> that is, the salvation of the damned. If the prayers of the righteous will be fulfilled when the damned finally participate in Grace, it is patent that the object of their prayers was the salvation of the damned.

The same idea of the successful intercession of the just for sinners is found in the *Epistula Apostolorum*, preserved in Coptic and Ethiopic. It seems to stem from the Syrian region, from the first half of the second century CE.<sup>191</sup> It describes a conversation between Jesus and the apostles after the former’s resurrection. In Ch. 40 the disciples express concern for sinners who will be punished in the other world, and Jesus replies: “You do well to be concerned, as the righteous worry about sinners, and pray to God and implore, and address their supplications to God.” The disciples then ask Jesus whether God will listen to that prayer and Jesus states: “I shall listen to the prayer of the just, which they utter for sinners.”<sup>192</sup> The intercession of the righteous for sinners was already found in 1 John 2:1, but there the righteous and intercessor was Christ himself: “If anyone sins, we have an intercessor [παράκλητος] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous [δίκαιος]; he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”<sup>193</sup> Origen emphasised the role of Christ as intercessor in this very passage (*Comm. in Cant.* 3,1,12).<sup>194</sup>

<sup>189</sup> *Your Eyes*, 60–61.

<sup>190</sup> Ed. by H.P. Houghton, “The Coptic Apocalypse, III, Akhmimite: The *Apocalypse of Elias*,” *Aegyptus* 39 (1959) 179–210.

<sup>191</sup> See A. Stewart-Sykes, “The Asian Context of the New Prophecy and of *Epistula Apostolorum*,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997) 416–438; Ch.E. Hill, “The *Epistula Apostolorum*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7 (1999) 1–53, who places the *Epistle* in Asia Minor in the first half of the second century; J. Hills, *Tradition and Composition in the Epistula Apostolorum* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), also takes the document to reflect early second-century traditions. According to M. Vinzent, “Give and Take amongst Second Century Authors,” *Studia Patristica* 50 (2011) 105–130 the *Epistula Apostolorum* fits well in second-century debates together with the *Ascensio Isaiae*, Marcion, and the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John.

<sup>192</sup> Ed. H. Duensing, *Epistula Apostolorum* (Bonn, 1925); M. Hornschuh, *Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum* (Berlin, 1965); Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 47–48.

<sup>193</sup> On this passage see D. Pastorelli, *Le Paraclet dans le corpus johannique* (Berlin, 2006), esp. Ch. 3.

<sup>194</sup> *De Iesu Christo nihilominus in epistula sua [Iohannes] dicit quia ipse sit advocatus apud Patrem pro peccatis nostris.*

The same notion of the intercession of the righteous for sinners occurs again in a Christian text from around 150 CE<sup>195</sup> that paraphrases a long section from the *Apocalypse of Peter*, in Book 2 of the *Oracula Sibyllina*.<sup>196</sup> After the description of the punishment of the damned, the place of the elect is described, after which the intercession of the elect for the damned is predicted in a way that is reminiscent of the Rainer fragment:

And God, immortal and omnipotent, will grant another gift to these pious persons: when they will ask him, he will grant them to save the human beings from the fierce fire, and from the otherworldly [αἰώνιος] gnashing of teeth, and will do so after pulling them out of the unquenchable flame and removing them [ἀπὸ φλογὸς ἀκαμάτοις ἄλλοσ' ἀποστήσας], destining them, for the sake of his own elect, to the other life, that of the world to come, for immortals [ζωὴν ἑτέραν καὶ αἰώνιον ἀθανάτοισιν], in the Elysian Fields, where there are the long waves of the Acherusian Lake, imperishable, which has a deep bed.

(2,330–338)

In the manuscript tradition, next to this passage, iambic verses recognise in it the doctrine of apokatastasis, ascribing it to Origen, and reject it: "This is completely false, because the fire will never cease to torment the damned. I may pray that this be the case, since I am marked by the deep scars of transgressions that are in need of the greatest Grace. But shame be on Origen for his mendacious words, who claims that there will be an end to the torments!" The *Oracula* were indeed widespread among Patristic authors and are quoted by Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen himself.<sup>197</sup> It is likely that the *Oracula* and/or the *Apocalypse of Peter* influenced Origen's (and already Clement's) doctrine of apokatastasis. Clement, who deemed the *Apocalypse of Peter* an inspired writing, much valued the *Oracula Sibyllina* as well, to the point of ascribing their recommendation to St. Paul in *Strom.* 6,5,42,3–43,2, precisely on account of their eschatological predictions. Drawing on "apocryphal" Acts of Paul, Clement quotes the words with

<sup>195</sup> According to J.L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles* (Oxford, 2007), 150, the author of Books 1–2 is a second-century Christian; O. Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1–2: Studien und Kommentar* (Leiden, 2011), 502–503, proposes a second-century setting in Asia Minor. Some editors include *Orac.* 2,190–338 as an appendix to the *Apocalypse of Peter*: James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 521–524; Elliott, "The Apocalypse of Peter," 613.

<sup>196</sup> The whole *Oracula* are a collection of texts from different epochs, from the II century BCE to the IV CE. See P. Dronke, *Hermes and the Sibyls* (Cambridge, 1990); Th.H. Tobin, "Philo and the Sibyl," *Studia Philonica Annual* 9 (1997) 84–103.

<sup>197</sup> See G.J.M. Bartelink, "Die *Oracula Sibyllina* in den frühchristlichen griechischen Schriften von Justin bis Origenes," in *Early Christian Poetry*, ed. J. den Boeft–A. Hilhorst (Leiden, 1993), 23–33.

which the apostle purportedly exhorted the Christians to read the “Sibyl” and find therein the proclamation of the unicity of God and the prediction of the things to come.

Two other texts are relevant to the present investigation: the *Odes of Solomon*, apparently a second-century CE writing,<sup>198</sup> and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.<sup>199</sup> Here, the salvation of the damned is the result, not of the saints’ intercession, but of Christ’s *descensus ad inferos*.<sup>200</sup> In *Od. Sal.* 17,8–14, Christ is represented as breaking the gates of hell and receiving all of its prisoners into himself: “Nothing appeared to me closed any longer, because I was the Door/Gate of all. I went on to *all prisoners, to liberate them*, in order not to leave anyone enchained or enchaining others [...] I sowed my own fruits in their hearts and I transformed them into Myself: they received my blessing and had life. They *have been gathered in Me and are saved*, because they have become my limbs, and I am their head.” The same notion is reinforced in *Od. Sal.* 42. Likewise, in *Evang. Nicod.* 5 (21) and 7–8 (23–24) Christ has all the dead exit hell (“the iron bars were broken, and all the dead who had been bound came out of the prisons”); he snatches all the dead not only from hell but also from Satan, which makes it clear that he liberates them not only from physical death, but also from sin: “No dead is left with us: all those whom you [sc. Satan] had gained with the tree of knowledge, you have now lost with the tree of the Cross. [...] You wanted to destroy the

<sup>198</sup> It is unclear whether the *Odes* were first composed in Greek or Syriac, and whether they are a Christian adaptation of pre-existing Jewish material. The earliest extant mss. stem from end III–early IV cent. Cod. Syr. 9 in the John Rylands Library is the most complete of the extant texts (*Odes* 3–42), but it is also very late (XV cent.). See at least J.H. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (Missoula, Mo. 1977); Id., “Odes of Solomon,” in *The Anchor Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 6 (New York, 1992), 114; M. Franzmann, *The Odes of Solomon: Analysis of the Poetical Structure and Form* (Göttingen, 1991). H.J.W. Drijvers, *East of Antioch* (Aldershot, 1984), advocates a later date (III cent.). It is interesting that the very same imagery of God the Father as Mother who gives birth and milk that occurs in Clement is found also in *Od. Sal.* 19,2–6: “The Son is the cup [sc. of milk], and the Father is He who was milked; and the Holy Spirit is She who milked Him; Because His breasts were full, and it was undesirable that His milk should be ineffectually released. The Holy Spirit opened Her bosom, and mixed the milk of the two breasts of the Father. Then She gave the mixture to the generation without their knowing, and those who have received it are in the perfection of the right hand. The womb of the Virgin took it, and she received conception and gave birth.” In Syriac, this feminine concept of God was facilitated by the feminine gender of *ruhā*, “Spirit.”

<sup>199</sup> The first part of this Gospel contains *Acts of Pilate* (distinct from the historical report of Pilate on Jesus known to Justin); the second part focuses on the *descensus ad inferos*. The final redaction seems to stem from the IV cent., but its layers are earlier.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. R. Gounelle, “Pourquoi, selon l’Évangile de Nicodème, le Christ est-il descendu aux enfers?,” in *Le mystère apocryphe*, eds. J.-D. Kaestli–D. Marguerat (Genève, 2007), 95–111.

glorious King, but you have destroyed yourself.” Christ “set right the first Father Adam,” with a διόρθωσις that is not only physical resurrection, but justification and salvation. This is what must be understood behind the statement, “and he liberated all” from hell. Also, in *Od. Sal.* 7,20–25 the salvation of all is suggested by the universal song of praise to God and the destruction of evil and ignorance: “And hatred shall be removed from the earth, and with jealousy it shall be drowned. For ignorance was destroyed upon it, because the knowledge of the Lord arrived upon it. Let singers sing the grace of the Lord Most High, and let them bring their songs. And let their heart be like the day, and their gentle voices like the majestic beauty of the Lord. And *let there not be anyone who breathes that is without knowledge or voice*. For He gave a mouth to His creation: to open the voice of the mouth towards Him and praise Him.”<sup>201</sup>

It is interesting to note incidentally that the idea of the intercession of the blessed for the salvation of the damned will return later on in the long history of the Christian doctrine of apokatastasis. For instance, in the first half of the thirteenth century, Hadewijch, a beguine and a mystic from Antwerp, the author of poems, letters, and the *Visions*, observed that God wants to unify all human beings in Christ, and while the predestination seems to be limited to those who will know Christ and enter the church, the love of God extends to all human beings. Those predestined to blessedness will walk on the path of love, and with their prayer will intercede for the eventual salvation of all the others, whom God has handed to their care.<sup>202</sup> Centuries later, the role of the intercession of the blessed in the reintegration of all will be underlined by N. Berdjaev,<sup>203</sup> who thought that the eternity of hell would imply that the final victory would be of Satan and not of the Godhead, who, in this case, would be unable to conquer the love of its children. What is more, the blessed—he argued—would be unable to enjoy their bliss, knowing that the damned are suffering.<sup>204</sup> This is in line

<sup>201</sup> Tr. Charlesworth with minimal changes.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. G. Dalla Croce–P.M. Bernardo Hurault–R. Berardi, *Hadewijch, Lettere* (Cinisello Balsamo, 1992), *Ep.* 22, n. 24 and the introduction; Hadewijch, *Das Buch der Visionen*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt, 1998).

<sup>203</sup> Berdjaev (1874–1948) was born in Kiev and received an Orthodox education. He studied in Heidelberg later and adhered to Marxism, which he then rejected.

<sup>204</sup> N. Berdjaev, *The Beginning and the End* (1952) 235–239; *The Destiny of Man* (1960) 273–283; M.L. Basso, *Filosofia dell'esistenza e storia: K. Jaspers e N. Berdjaev* (Bologna, 1994); A.G. Vitolo–G. Lami, *Storia e filosofia in N.A. Berdjaev* (Milan, 32000); O. Clément, *Lunga strada di una filosofia religiosa* (Milan, 2003).



with the notion of the intercession of the blessed for the damned. Berdjaev too, like Origen, Nyssen, and many Patristic supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis, regarded Christ as the main agent of the eventual restoration, in that Christ has rebuilt the link between God and the human being, thus liberating the latter from enslavement to nature and death.

The *Apocalypse of Paul* has many things in common with that of Peter and with the *Sibylline Oracles*. Though, it is difficult to assess what its original Greek recension was like, since this text, perhaps stemming from the third century, is lost and what is extant is a Latin version from the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century: the *Visio Pauli*.<sup>205</sup> However, the *Apocalypse of Paul* as well reveals a dynamic conception of spiritual life in the other world and the possibility of repentance and baptism even after death (just as in the *Apocalypse of Peter* 14). Indeed, in *Ap. Paul.* 22 sinners are said to be baptised in the Acherusian Lake, after their post-mortem repentance. Moreover, in *Ap. Paul.* 24, haughty people, who cannot enter the heavenly Jerusalem, are finally allowed to enter it thanks to intercession.

In the *Life of Adam and Eve*,<sup>206</sup> in a Latin recension,<sup>207</sup> God foretells that he will have mercy upon all, by means of Christ. He addresses the archangel Michael in the following terms: *pone eum [sc. Adam] in Paradiso, in tertio caelo, usque in diem dispensationis qui dicitur economia, quando faciam*

<sup>205</sup> Cf. J.N. Bremmer–I. Czachesz, *The Visio Pauli and the Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul* (Louisvain, 2007). W. Schneemelcher, ed., tr. R. McL. Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha: Writings Relating to the Apostles Apocalypses and Related Subjects* (Louisville, 1992), 695–700; A. Jakab, “La réception de l’Apocalypse de Paul dans le christianisme de l’Antiquité Tardive,” in *Miscellanea patristica reverendissimo domino Marco Starowieyski* (Warsaw, 2007), 145–157; T. Silverstein–A. Hilhorst, *Apocalypse of Paul. A New Critical Edition of Three Long Latin Versions* (Genève, 1997), 11–21, according to whom the longer Latin recension L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>3</sub>, preserved in four of the most ancient Latin mss., represents a translation (stemming from 450–530 CE) of a second edition of the Greek Apocalypse stemming from the beginning of the fifth century; the first Greek edition existed in Egypt around mid-third century. Contrast C. Carozzi, *Eschatologie et au-delà: Recherches sur l’Apocalypse de Paul* (Aix-en-Provence, 1994), 165–166.

<sup>206</sup> See D.A. Bertrand, *La Vie grecque d’Adam et d’Ève* (Paris, 1987); I.M. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta, 1992); J.R. Levison, “Adam and Eve, Life of,” in *The Anchor Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1 (New York, 1992), 64–66; M. De Jonge, “The Christian Origin of the *Life of Adam and Eve*,” in *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature: The Case of the Testaments of the XII Patriarchs and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (Leiden, 2003), 184–200; Id.–L.M. White, “The Washing of Adam in the Acherusian Lake (Greek Life of Adam and Eve, 37, 7) in the Context of Early Christian Notions of Afterlife,” in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture*, eds. J. Fitzgerald–T.H. Olbricht–L.M. White (Leiden, 2003), 609–637.

<sup>207</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 3832, ed. J.-P. Pettorelli, “Vie latine d’Adam et d’Ève. La recension de Paris, BNF, lat. 3832,” *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* 57 (1999) 5–52.

omnibus *miserecordiam per dilectissimum Filium meum*. This idea will reappear in a twentieth-century Christian nun and mystic, St. Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938).<sup>208</sup> She does not deny that hell exists and sinners are tormented there, but in her *Diary*, 5 (3.II.1938) she reports a declaration of Jesus to herself concerning the hour of his death: “In that hour, mercy was had on the whole world. Mercy has overcome justice.”

Whereas in the “apocryphal” texts I have examined beforehand the salvation of all is not explicitly declared, in the passage I quoted from the *Life of Adam and Eve* it is said that God’s mercy will be bestowed upon all, *omnibus*. Just as the *Apocalypse of Peter*, this text, too, assigns a fundamental role to Christ in this respect. The idea that universal salvation will depend on Christ will be emphasised by Origen.<sup>209</sup> A similar universalistic statement is found in another text whose composition is surrounded by mystery and much discussed in scholarship: the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. It is either an interpolated Jewish work or, more probably, a Christian work,<sup>210</sup> of a broadly Syrian milieu, dating to the mid second century or shortly afterwards. Origen was acquainted with it and, although he did not deem it canonical, appreciated it (*Hom. in Ies. Nav.* 15,6). This does not surprise, in the light of its eschatology. Here, indeed, in the Testament of Zebulon, what is announced is the eventual liberation of all sinners from their enslavement to the devil, here called Beliar:<sup>211</sup>

The Lord himself will rise [...] He will have *healing* [ἰασις] and *mercy* on his wings [Mal 4:2]. He will *liberate everyone* from the enslavement to Beliar. And every deceiving spirit will be *trodden*.  
(*Test. Zab.* 9,8)

This universal liberation from the powers of evil passes through Christ, his mercy, and his capacity as a Physician of the souls. All will reject evil (cf. *Test. Levi* 18) after Christ has healed them spiritually.

<sup>208</sup> She belonged to the order of the Blessed Virgin of Mercy and lived above all in Krakow and Vilnius. Her health was very poor. She wrote a *Diary* of visions of Jesus and messages received from him, and promoted the veneration of Jesus’s Mercy. She inspired pope John Paul II’s encyclical letter *Dives in Misericordia*. She was also canonised under the same pope.

<sup>209</sup> See I. Ramelli, “The Universal and Eternal Validity of Jesus’s High-Priestly Sacrifice,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts*, eds. R. Bauckham et al. (London, 2008), 210–221; Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History*, 65–116; Ramelli, “Origen and Apokatastasis.”

<sup>210</sup> So M. De Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Assen, 1975); Idem, “The Transmission of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs by Christians,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (1993) 1–28.

<sup>211</sup> On the defeat of Beliar in this work see now G.H. Twelftree, “Exorcism and the Defeat of Beliar in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011) 170–188.

The successful intercession of a righteous for a damned after the latter's death is a notion that is developed in two other texts whose authors were acquainted with the *Apocalypse of Peter*: the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*<sup>212</sup> and the *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*.<sup>213</sup> The former is a very popular "apocryphal" text inspired by encratism.<sup>214</sup> Here Falconilla, Tryphaena's dead daughter, reveals that Thecla, the virgin and apostle who is the heroine of these Acts, had prayed very much for her, that she could be transferred to the place of rest of the righteous (Thecla episode, 3,28–29). St. Thecla's prayers are fulfilled and the damned is saved. Likewise, in the *Passio Perpetuae*, composed shortly after 200 CE, the heroine, Perpetua, who is going to be a martyr, thanks to her prayers saves her small brother Dinocrates from damnation. He had died without baptism while still seven years old, and had appeared to her in a sad condition: miserable and thirsty. But his sister's prayers obtain a post-mortem baptism and salvation for him. Thus, in her second vision the small child appears happy and no more thirsty.<sup>215</sup> In all of these documents

<sup>212</sup> As for the fact that the author of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* knew the *Apocalypse of Peter* see Buchholz, *Your Eyes*, 51–53.

<sup>213</sup> J.A. Robinson, *The Passion of Saint Perpetua* (Cambridge, 1891), hypothesised that traces of the *Apocalypse of Peter* were to be found in the *Passio Perpetuae*, the Ethiopic text of the *Apocalypse* and, as it seems, the Greek Akhmîm fragment had not yet been published. The Akhmîm fragment was discovered together with the Passion fragment of the *Gospel of Peter* in a Gizah ms., then preserved at the Coptic Museum in Cairo, PCair 10759. Not only the *Apocalypse of Peter*, but also that of John seems to have influenced the *Passio Perpetuae*. See R. Petraglio, "Des influences de l'Apocalypse dans la *Passio Perpetuae* 11–13," in *L'Apocalypse de Jean. Traditions exégétiques et iconographiques, III–XIII siècles. Actes du Colloque de la Fondation Hardt, 29 février–3 mars 1976*, ed. Y. Christe (Genève, 1979), 15–29. See also J. Daniélou, "La littérature latine avant Tertullien," *Revue des Études Latines* 48 (1970) 357–375.

<sup>214</sup> See, e.g., Y. Tissot, "Encratisme et Actes apocryphes," in *Les actes apocryphes des apôtres*, ed. F. Bovon (Genève, 1981), 109–119; V. Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy* (Lewiston, NY 1987); K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride* (Cambridge, MA, 1996); M.B. McInerney, *Eloquent Virgins* (New York, 2003), Chs. 1–2; S.F. Johnson, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla* (Washington, DC, 2006), esp. Ch. 1 on the second-century *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, then paraphrased in the *Life and Miracles of Thekla*.

<sup>215</sup> See Trumbower, *Rescue*, 76–90; I. Ramelli, "Il dossier di Perpetua: una rilettura storica e letteraria," *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo, Accademia di Scienze e Lettere* 139 (2005) 309–452; Ead., "Alle origini della figura dell'intercessore," in *Mediadores con lo divino en el Mediterráneo antiguo*, Actas del Congreso Internacional de Historia de las Religiones, Palma 13–15.X.2005 (Palma de Mallorca, 2012), 1003–1049. Cf. J.H. Waszink, "Mors immatura," *Vigiliae Christianae* 3 (1949), 107–112; M.P. Ciccarese, "Le più antiche rappresentazioni del purgatorio dalla *Passio Perpetuae* alla fine del IX secolo," *Romanobarbarica* 7 (1982–1983) 33–76; A.P. Orban, "The Afterlife in the Visions of the *Passio SS. Perpetuae et Felicitatis*," in *Fructus centesimus. Mélanges Gerard J.M. Bartelink*, ed. A.A.R. Bastiaensen–A. Hilhorst–C.H. Kneepkens (Steenbrugge–Dordrecht, 1989), 269–277; F.J. Dölger, "Antike Parallelen zum leidenden Dinocrates in der *Passio Perpetuae*," *Antike und Christentum* 2,1 (1932) 1–10.

there is no trace of a tripartition into hell, purgatory, and Paradise.<sup>216</sup> Mention is only made of sinners who are damned and, thanks to the intercessory prayers of the righteous, can pass on to Paradise. The idea of intercessory prayers and good deeds on behalf of the dead is already hinted at in the NT, for instance in 1 Cor 15:29. Paul attests that some practiced a baptism for the dead, clearly in order to help the dead. In the third century, Cyprian of Carthage attests that Christians made offerings for the dead during Mass.<sup>217</sup> Clearly they thought that this would help the dead and did not regard the condition of the dead as unchangeable. Cyprian reports the decision of an African synod from 257 CE, which, by forbidding in some cases offerings and prayers for the dead, indirectly testifies to this practice. Tertullian, a contemporary of Perpetua, in *De cor.* 3,3, attests that offerings for the dead were regularly made on the anniversary of their death, the day of their birth to heaven: *oblationes pro defunctis, pro nataliciis, annua die facimus*.<sup>218</sup> And in *De monog.* 10 Tertullian exhorts widows to pray for their husbands' souls.<sup>219</sup> Later testimonies are numerous and rich.<sup>220</sup>

Another text belonging to the so-called NT apocrypha that is relevant to the present investigation is the *Acts of Thomas*. These Acts may stem from an Edessan milieu shortly before 200 CE and are devoted to the evangelisation of Parthia and India by the apostle Judas Thomas.<sup>221</sup> A passage in these Acts

<sup>216</sup> According to J. Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London, 2002), *praes.* ch. 5, the notion of purgatory, which is a late theological construct, arose from a change in penitential practices (69). See also M.P. Ciccarese, "La nascita del purgatorio," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 17 (2000) 133–150; G. Tamagno, "La topografia del Purgatorio nelle visioni medievali dell'aldilà," *Silvae di Latina Didaxis* 3,6 (2002) 5–25, also with analysis of the *Passio Perpetuae*; G. Anrich, *Clemens und Origenes als Begründer der Lehre vom Fegfeuer* (Tübingen–Leipzig, 1902); H. Rondet, *Le purgatoire* (Paris, 1948); K. Rahner–J. Gnllka et al., s.v. "Fegfeuer," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 4 (1960) 49–55. J. Le Goff, *La naissance du purgatoire* (Paris, 1981); R.B. Eno, "Some Patristic Views on the Relationship of Faith and Works in Justification," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 19 (1984) 3–27; P. Brown, "Vers la naissance du Purgatoire," *Annales: histoire, sciences sociales* 52 (1997) 1247–1261.

<sup>217</sup> P. Jay, "Saint Cyprien et la doctrine du purgatoire," *Recherches de théologie* 27 (1960) 133–136; also E. Vacandard, "La prière pour les trépassés dans les premiers siècles," *Revue du clergé français* Oct.–Dec. (1907), 146–161.

<sup>218</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Osservazioni sul concetto di 'giorno natalizio' nel mondo greco e romano e sull'espressione di Seneca *dies aeterni natalis*," *Ilu* 6 (2001), 169–181.

<sup>219</sup> See also A. Maon, "Tertullian and Purgatory," *Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1902) 598–601.

<sup>220</sup> E.g. Epiphanius *AH* 75; Ps. Dion. *EH* 3,7; *Const. Apost.* 6 and 8; plenty of liturgical texts attesting prayers and offerings for the dead, of course aimed at improving their condition.

<sup>221</sup> See A.F.J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas* (Leiden, 1962); I. Ramelli, *Gli apostoli in India nella Patristica e nella letteratura sanscrita*, in coll. with C. Dognini (Milan, 2001).

(Act 6, *praes.* Chs. 55–57) suggests that their author was acquainted with the *Apocalypse of Peter*.<sup>222</sup> Moreover, the *Acts of Thomas* cite Bardaisan, a supporter of apokatastasis.<sup>223</sup> In this connection, it is significant that these Acts insist on the universality of the salvation brought about by Christ, on his victory over evil, on his descent to hell and the liberation of the souls that are imprisoned there, and on his role of Physician of the souls. In Ch. 4 the parable of the king is mentioned, who invites all to the nuptial banquet as an image of God who invites all to the Kingdom. Special attention is paid to the universality of this invitation: “The King has sent heralds to proclaim everywhere that *all must come* to the marriage, rich and poor, slaves and free people, strangers and citizens.” In Ch. 7 God is called “the Father of all” and in Ch. 10 Jesus is described as

the refuge and rest of the oppressed, the hope of the poor, and the liberation of the prisoners, the Physician of the souls that are ill and the Saviour of all the creation, you who give life to the world and reinforce the souls [...] You, o Lord, are the one who is found in *all things*, and passes through everything; you are found in all of your creatures and manifest yourself in their activities, Jesus Christ, Son of mercy and perfect Saviour, Child of the living God. Your power without fear has annihilated the enemy, your voice was heard by the evil powers and has shaken their forces. You are the ambassador sent from on high and have descended down to hell; you have opened its gates and have *liberated* those who for many centuries had been closed up in the prison of darkness and have shown them the way that leads to on high.

In Ch. 25 Christ is addressed in the following terms: “You, o Lord, are the one who shows *mercy to all* and spares human beings. These have neglected you because of the error that is in them, but you have not neglected them.” In Ch. 29 the Eucharist is said to be administered “for mercy and grace, not for judgment and retribution.” In Chs. 31–33 Jesus is said to snatch from the devil his prey, thus “depriving him of his dominion over the souls of human beings.” In Ch. 44, it is remarked that demons would like to keep their dominion over the wicked, so to leave to Jesus the dominion over the good, but Jesus intends to snatch the former as well from them. In Ch. 47 the ontological non-subsistence of evil is proclaimed and its final vanishing

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<sup>222</sup> A. Jakab, “The Reception of the *Apocalypse of Peter* in Ancient Christianity,” in *Apocalypse of Peter*, 174–186, *praes.* 178.

<sup>223</sup> See below in this same chapter, the section devoted to Bardaisan. For the quotation from Bardaisan in these Acts see I. Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa: A Reassessment of the Evidence and a New Interpretation. Also in the Light of Origen and the Original Fragments from De India* (Piscataway, 2009), 127–131.

(a fundamental tenet of the doctrine of apokatastasis). So, the devil literally dissolves into smoke and disappears, thus showing its non-being. Immediately afterwards, Jesus is hailed as

the Saviour who resurrects the dead, who heals the ill [...] the Logos that comes from total mercy, *Saviour of all*, right hand of light, who defeats the evil one.

In Ch. 72 Jesus is described as “Jesus who receives all [...] with your blood you have bought us; you have gained us as your possession at an incredibly high price.” Again in Ch. 80 Jesus is depicted as

merciful and pacific [...] glory to your mercy bestowed on us [...] glory to your humanity that died on our behalf, to vivify us. Glory to your resurrection from the dead, because resurrection and peace for souls comes from there. Glory to your ascension to heaven, because you have shown us the way to on high, and have promised us that we shall sit with you to your right.

Another so-called NT Apocryphon is the *Acts of Philip*, which have an encratite vein but are not “heterodox” and even seem to counter “Ophite Gnosticism” in their opposition to the veneration of the serpent. They are relevant to the present research in that they include many elements that point to the theory of apokatastasis.<sup>224</sup> After Bonnet’s edition,<sup>225</sup> a new edition has been prepared by François Bovon, who, along with Bertrand Bouvier, discovered a new Athos manuscript of these Acts, Xenophontos 32 (A).<sup>226</sup> The Athos codex includes a longer and more ancient redaction than Vatican Codex V, which has undergone the elimination of sheets or quires. Codex A includes the description of an ascetic community in which both women and men were deacons and presbyters. Indeed, the Codex mentions πρεσβυτέρους, πρεσβυτίδας, εὐνούχους, διακόνους, διακονίσσας, παρθένους.<sup>227</sup> In the

<sup>224</sup> See I. Ramelli, “Mansuetudine, grazia e salvezza negli *Acta Philippi* (ed. Bovon),” *Invigilata Lucernis* 29 (2007) 215–228.

<sup>225</sup> M. Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, 2,2 (Leipzig, 1903; repr. Hildesheim, 1972), 1–90, tr. M.R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament, Translation and Notes* (Oxford, 1924).

<sup>226</sup> *Acta Philippi*, cura F. Bovon, B. Bouvier, F. Amsler, Corpus Christianorum Series apocryphorum 11 (Turnhout 1999).

<sup>227</sup> On women deacons and presbyters in the first Christian centuries see K. Madigan–C. Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Early Church. A Documentary History* (Baltimore–London, 2005); J. Murphy–O’Connor–C. Militello–M.L. Rigato, *Paolo e le donne* (Assisi, 2006); G. Macy, *The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination. Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (Oxford, 2008), with review by I. Ramelli, *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 74,2 (2008) 347–353; I. Ramelli, “Theosebia: A Presbyter of the Catholic Church,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26,2 (2010) 79–102; M.-L. Rigato, *Discepoli di Gesù* (Bologna, 2011). See also W. Cotter, “Women’s Authority Roles in Paul’s Churches: Countercultural or Conventional?” *Novum*

*Acts of Philip*, it is not only Philip and Bartholomew who are apostles, but also Mariamme, the sister of Philip, who in fact is presented as a much better apostle than her brother. It is meaningful that in the Coptic translation the need was felt to replace her with the apostle Peter (!). The *Acts of Philip*, in particular in their Codex A recension, have an important witness in an icon from Arsos (Cyprus).<sup>228</sup>

Act 1 offers a soteriological overture: Philip performs there a resurrection and promises life in the next world in Christ: "The devil deceives humans and deprives them of the αἰώνιος life [...] but Christ, who was crucified and buried, reigns over the aeons; whoever believes in him has the αἰώνιος life." In Act 2 (from cod. V) § 1 ff. Philip too, like Paul, preaches the Christian faith to the Athenians.<sup>229</sup> Philip is charged with the introduction, not of a foreign religion, but of a foreign philosophy; the Athenian philosophers write to Ananias, the Jewish high priest, who comes to Athens, has a debate with Philip before the philosophers, and becomes blind. But Christ subsequently appears to him and restores his sight. Jesus wants to transform Philip into a man full of gentleness, πραότης (§ 17). Since Ananias and his people still refuse to believe, Philip has them slowly sink into an abyss, with the following threat: "If he [sc. Ananias] persists in his incredulity, you will see him become engulfed, unless the Lord will *resurrect those who are in hell*, that they confess that Jesus is the Lord, because on that day *every tongue* will confess that Jesus is the Lord."

In Act 3, § 12 between the sky and the sea a shining cross appears, which will appear again at the end of these Acts and which is worshipped by sea animals. In Act 5, § 1, Philip teaches "the great deeds of God: *salvation* [σωτηρία], gentleness/meekness, hope, and the good perfume of faith." In § 4, Philip proclaims Christ's eventual victory over the devil: "He saves us from every snare and deceit of the devil, whom the Lord Jesus in the end will punish." In § 24 Philip promises: "You will all be saved by Jesus." In

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*Testamentum* 36 (1994) 350–372, according to whom women's leadership in churches was not countercultural vis-à-vis Roman cultural standards, esp. in associations. The same is contended by Z. Crook, "Honor, Shame, and Social Status Revisited," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128 (2009) 591–611, *praes.* 607–609.

<sup>228</sup> F. Bovon, "From Vermont to Cyprus: A New Witness of the *Acts of Philip*," *Apocrypha* 20 (2009) 9–27. This is a recently restored icon (church of St. Philip, Arsos) with scenes from the *Acts of Philip*, in particular in the form attested to in Codex A.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. I. Ramelli, "Philosophen und Prediger" and "Dieu et la philosophie: le discours de Paul à Athènes dans trois 'actes apocryphes' et dans la philosophie patristique," *Gregorianum* 93 (2012) 75–91.

§ 27 glory is given to God who, in his maternal mercy (εὐσπλαγγνία), “has had mercy upon us.” In Act 6, § 19, before resurrecting a child, Philip demands of his father that he gives up vengeance, a veritable leitmotiv in the *Acts of Philip*.

In Act 8, the Lord, through Philip, converts a leopard from his “evil heart” to meekness, so that he renounces devouring a small kid (§ 17 del cod. V). The leopard symbolises evil people who convert to meekness and gentleness. In Isa 11:6–7, a prediction of the restoration of the people of the Lord and the eventual apokatastasis brought about by the righteousness and faithfulness of the descendant of Jesse, it is stated that the leopard and the kid will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. In § 18 (cod. V), Philip refers to the kid as “the wounded one who has recovered and cures the one who has wounded him,” the latter being the leopard (but with Christological overtones, the wounded may represent Christ, God’s Lamb, who heals the human being who killed him). Both the leopard and the kid convert to the Lord and assume human logos, word and reason, glorifying God for this. This is a sign of the divine grace that converts souls, even the most ferocious. This is why Philip and Bartholomew in § 19 declare: “Now we have really realised that there is nobody who surpasses your *tender and compassionate mercy*, o Jesus, you who love humanity!” Jesus had mercy upon wild animals because he loves *humanity*. This further suggests that these animals—like in Theophilus, *Aut.* 2,17—represent fierce sinners. Now, Jesus can convert and save even these. The assimilation of fierce sinners to ferocious beasts is also found in Origen, *Dial. Her.* 14, who too avers that Christ-Logos can transform these ferocious beasts into human beings: “Even if you were a ferocious beast, by listening to the Logos who tames and makes gentler, who transforms you into a human being, by the Logos you will never be addressed as ‘snake, race of vipers’ any longer. For, if it were impossible for these snakes—snakes in their souls because of sin—to be transformed into human beings, the Saviour, o John, would not have said, ‘Make worthy fruits of repentance.’ After repenting/converting, you will no more be a ‘snake, race of vipers.’” Likewise in *Hom. in Gen.* 2,3 Origen interprets ferocious beasts as symbols of those people *quorum feritatis saeuitiam nec fidei dulcedo molliuit*. Here in the *Acts of Philip*, too, the conversion of animals to faith and even to human form and speech may symbolise the transformative power of the Logos.

Again in § 19, mindful of Isaiah’s above-mentioned prophecy, the apostles pray to God that the animals may “attain meekness and eat no more flesh.” As François Bovon has observed (albeit in an article in which he does not treat the *Acts of Philip*), stories of conversions of animals in the



so-called apocryphal Acts of Apostles represent the end of the rule of violence.<sup>230</sup> In § 20, the animals stand like human beings, and glorify God: “You who have changed our bestial nature into meekness.” In Act 12 (cod. A), when Philip gives the Eucharist to Mariamme and Bartholomew, the leopard and the kid, being excluded, cry, and the former makes a speech: “My bestial nature has been modified and has transformed into *goodness* [ἀγαθότης] [...] The beauty of the figure of the Son has killed the dragon and the serpents, and has not forbidden us to accede to his mystery [...] we have experienced the glorious presence of your (intercessory) prayers and benedictions [...] Granted, I am a ferocious beast, but why has this kid here not merited the Eucharist? Is it not the case that we, too, have life secured with God? Thus, you be merciful with us, because the same God is in everyone and has given us the Logos with generosity [...] we have become like humans, and truly God dwells in us [...] Apostles of the good Saviour, make this grace to us: let our bestial body be transformed, and may we abandon the animal appearance” (§§ 2–4). What transforms “animals” into humans is the *logos* and the *nous*, the intellect, as stated in § 5:

We believe that this will be actually realised thanks to you, because the *nous* necessarily prevails, the *nous* that inhabits all thoughts/reasonings [λογισμοί] and even the heart. This *nous* has begun to dwell in us and has led us to lofty sentiments [...] It drags us out of the heavy torpor of bestiality and little by little transfers us to meekness, until we become complete human beings, in body and soul.

Again at the end of § 5, the mercy of God is emphasised, which brings all creatures to salvation by means of the work of divine providence: “God who takes *providential care of every nature* [πάσαν φύσιν], even those of ferocious creatures, on account of his great mercy, maternal and compassionate [διὰ πολλὴν αὐτοῦ εὐσπλαγγνίαν].” This means that God’s providence extends even to the worse sinners, who are creatures of God—an idea that was developed by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Diodore of Tarsus. The universality of the salvific plan of God is made clear in § 6:

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<sup>230</sup> F. Bovon, “The Child and the Beast: Fighting Violence in Ancient Christianity,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1999) 369–392, who, besides Luke 9:46–48, examines esp. the *Acts of John* (81), the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Acts of Peter* (17), *Acts of Paul* 9:19 and authors such as Clement (*Paed.* 1,5,24) and Leo the Great, *Serm.* 18,3. On the representation of animals in the “apocryphal Acts” see J.E. Spittler, *Animals in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* (Tübingen, 2008).

God has visited the universe by means of his Christ, including in his salvific economy not only human beings, but also beasts and every species of animals. Who can describe God's good providence, which God shows to us uninterruptedly?

In § 7 the author highlights the role of Christ as Physician, which was dear to Clement, Origen, and other Patristic authors and of course was relevant to the theory of apokatastasis: "Saviour of the aeons, you who heal those who are blinded by the leukoma of evilness, come." After receiving a human soul—which may symbolise the transformation of fierce sinners into meek persons, a spiritual resurrection—the animals also receive a human body, and the way in which they thank the Lord for this in § 8 suggests that this is a metaphor of the resurrection, possibly also of baptism which in turn symbolised the resurrection: "We glorify you, o Lord, only-begotten Son, for the immortal birth in which we have now been born." Soon after, the universal extent of God's providence is underlined: "We believe that there exists no living creature to which our God does not extend his *providential care for its salvation* [εἰς σωτηρίαν]."

An interesting parallel to the conversion of savage beasts to meekness is found in the *Acts of Paul*, where a lion experiences this same conversion and is baptised. After this, Paul glorifies God, "who has given the Logos to savage beasts and salvation to those who serve him." Savage beasts represent the worst sinners, those who are farthest removed from God and the human nature. In *Acts of Philip*, Act 8, § 3 (cod. G) Jesus pronounces a noteworthy universalistic statement: the suffering of Mariamme and Philip, who will undergo martyrdom, will be aimed at "the redemption of the whole world" (ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου), clearly qua participation in the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. Their martyrdom is linked with the capacity for renouncing returning evil for evil. Philip does not possess this ability, which is also designated by ἀνδρεία, while Mariamme does.<sup>231</sup> This theme of renouncing retaliation is fundamental from Act 15 onwards. In Act 8, § 8, Philip cries because he fears he will be unable to give up retaliation. But this is what Jesus demands of him and of all his followers: "never cease to do good to those who harm you" (§ 12).

The universally salvific aim of Christ's and the apostles' mission is also clear from § 14 (ms. G), in which Christ says to Philip:

<sup>231</sup> Cf. F. Bovon, "Le privilège pascal de Marie-Madeleine," *New Testament Studies* 30 (1984) 50–62, *praes.* 62; Idem, *Les Actes de Philippe*, 4460–4464 and 4494.

You, in turn, imitate all the good things. Be mindful of the heavenly luminaries, too, and imitate them. And you too, my disciples, imitate all of them: just as they spread their beneficial light onto the good and the evil alike, without favouring anyone, in the same way you will become an *instrument for the salvation of the whole world* [ὄλου τοῦ κόσμου].

In Act 9 (cod. V), the combat against the dark dragon is a symbol of the combat against evil, and in Act 11, § 2 the demons confirm their defeat: “We have been reduced to nothing; indeed, the one who was crucified in order to contrast us has *dried out our ancient nature* [τὴν ἀρχαίαν ἡμῶν φύσιν].” The ancient nature of the demons is the evil nature, which is now destroyed. This is clarified in § 3, where a demon is ordered to reveal its ancient nature, after which the demons appear like reptiles and the dragon as their origin (Rev 12:9 describes Satan as “the great dragon, the ancient serpent”). If this evil nature is destroyed, the door is left open for their reintegration into the Good. Indeed, in § 6 the demons announce their decision to serve the Good (and therefore Christ and his apostles): “Do not destroy us [...] now we are going to serve you [...] provided only that you do not annihilate us.” Philip thanks God and celebrates the Divinity as “the Good that vivifies [...] that liberates those who are in bonds.” In Act 13 (cod. A), § 5 the apostle celebrates the salvific power of Christ, which includes even those who are in perdition:

Thanks to the Logos of the Most High we defeat the rulers of the world of darkness and eliminate the hardening from people, we heal the infirmity of the blind and exorcise the demons of forgetfulness and chase them away from their dwelling place [sc. the human being] [...] Christ, the *salvation of those who are in perdition* [ἡ σωτηρία τῶν ἀπολλυμένων], the liberation of those who are enslaved [...] the initiator of life.

In Act 14 (cod. A), all accept baptism and receive it from Philip and Mariamme (a scene that is repeated in Act 15, cod. A). In § 7 the “holy Logos” of God is proclaimed “the true Physician, who heals not only the body, but also the soul.” The notion of *Christus medicus* appears again. In Act 15, § 26, following a curse by Philip, an abyss opens up that swallows all the inhabitants (apart from the few converts, the twenty-four women who have decided to live in chastity, away from their spouses, and the forty virgins). But Jesus will save those swallowed, even if they were impious and did not believe in him. They will in fact convert. In § 32, Jesus draws a huge cross in the air and fills it with light. This reminds one of the huge cross that is found in the most ancient scene of the *Gospel of Peter*, in relation to Jesus’s *descensus ad inferos*. Jesus calls the people in the abyss and these come up using the cross as a ladder. All of them exit from the abyss, voluntarily, thanks to their voluntary conversion: only the viper, adored by the pagans, and the proconsul

still refuse to convert and voluntarily remain in the abyss. All the people, after repenting, proclaim: “We repent of the error in which we were found yesterday, still unworthy as we were of the life in the world to come, and we believe.”

In § 31 (= Ch. 9, §§ 137–138 ed. Bonnet), the punishment that the Lord will impose on Philip for his sin—that is, retaliation, to return evil in exchange for evil and not to practice forgiveness—is to delay his entrance into Paradise: “you will be kept in the aeons [αἰῶνες] for forty days before arriving at the place that has been announced to you.” Philip in §§ 33–34 acknowledges his sin and praises the Lord who “has *set free the whole world* [ἔλῳν τὸν κόσμον] from the deceit of the devil.” In § 140 Bonnet, Philip exalts the “sweetness/gentleness” of Christ, who has people come back from the abyss, and God’s goodness, which has people reject evil, so to become worthy of communion with Christ. In § 35, the liberation of the snake-worshippers is described as a liberation from hell thanks to Christ’s cross:

You who have been resurrected from the dead and from the hell of abyss, you who have been brought back by the luminous Cross thanks to Christ’s goodness [ἀγαθότης] [...] He is the one who has all the sweetness [...] Thus, taste him and never abandon him, and he will give you life in the aeons.

*“Gnostic” Conceptions of Apokatastasis: Not Universal, Not Holistic*

The *Acts of Philip*, which include hints to universal salvation, are not a “Gnostic” text; they might even reveal anti-Gnostic (anti-Ophitic) traits, as I have suggested. Indeed, the understanding(s) of apokatastasis in “Gnosticisms” differ substantially from Origen’s and his followers’ notion of apokatastasis, and from that which is suggested in the *Acts of Philip*. Since I have studied “Gnostic” conceptions of apokatastasis at length elsewhere,<sup>232</sup> I shall not repeat everything here. I simply note that what results from this systematic investigation is that in “Gnosticism” both the notion of apokatastasis and the relevant term are attested, but “Gnostic” apokatastasis is neither universal nor holistic. It is not universal because, at least in the “Valentinian” system, both “material people” (ὕλικοί) and a part of the “animal people” (ψυχικοί) are excluded from restoration and salvation; only “spiritual people”

<sup>232</sup> “Apokatastasis in Coptic Gnostic Texts from Nag Hammadi and Clement’s and Origen’s Apokatastasis: Toward an Assessment of the Origin of the Doctrine of Universal Restoration,” *Journal of Coptic Studies* 14 (2012) 33–45.

(πνευματικοί) are restored to their original abode.<sup>233</sup> Moreover, “Gnostic” apokatastasis is generally not holistic, since it is conceived as the restoration of the soul and does not include the resurrection of the body as well (as it is the case, instead, with Origen, Gregory Nyssen, Maximus, and several Fathers who entertained a “holistic” conception of resurrection-restoration). This is clear, for instance, from the *Exegesis of the Soul* (NHC II 6, 134,7–12; 137,5–10) and the *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II 2, 67,9–19).

For this reason, “Gnostic” apokatastasis is very different from Origen’s and his followers’ apokatastasis, which is both universal and holistic. However, the presence of a notion of apokatastasis in some Gnostic works as well, such as the *Tripartite Tractate*, which admits it for both the πνευματικοί and the ψυχικοί, very probably contributed to foment accusations of Gnosticism against Origen. In this connection, it is paradoxical that the *Tripartite Tractate* provides one of the most explicit examples of the Valentinian division of humanity into three natures or γένη (Coptic ρενος),<sup>234</sup> which Origen spent his life to combat. In this treatise it is evident that this tripartition has necessitarian soteriological implications for the “spiritual kind,” the “psychic kind,” and the “material kind” of persons (118,14–122,12), which Origen could not endorse.

The notion of the eventual apokatastasis as a return to unity—a prominent theme in the eschatology of supporters of the apokatastasis doctrine such as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, and up to Eriugena—interestingly appears in a report by Irenaeus, which he ascribes to “Mark the Magician” (*AH* 1,14,1) and which Einar Thomassen included in the *testimonia* of Valentinian thought in an all-important book:<sup>235</sup>

Τότε δὲ καὶ τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν τῶν ὅλων ἔφη γενέσθαι, ὅταν τὰ πάντα κατελθόντα εἰς τὸ ἓν γράμμα μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκφώνησιν ἡχῇσιν.<sup>236</sup>

Then—he said—the universal apokatastasis will also take place, when all beings *return* to the one letter and resound *one and the same utterance*.

<sup>233</sup> Or else, in the *Gospel of Mary* (P. Berolinensis 8502,1), restoration is universal, but not uniform: every nature returns to its own origin, different from that of the others.

<sup>234</sup> See E. Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the Valentinians* (Leiden, 2008), 50–52.

<sup>235</sup> *The Spiritual Seed*, 241–247.

<sup>236</sup> This is the context: “Ἐκαστον γὰρ αὐτῶν μέρος ἐν τοῦ ὅλου, τὸν ἴδιον ἦχον ὡς τὸ πᾶν ὀνομάζειν, καὶ μὴ παύσασθαι ἠχοῦντα, μέχρι οὗ ἐπὶ τὸ ἕσχατον γράμμα τοῦ ἐκάστου [*Hipp.* ἐσχάτου] στοιχείου μονογλωσσῆσαντος καταστήσῃ [*Hipp.* μονογλωττήσαντι καταστήσῃ]. Τότε δὲ καὶ τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν τῶν ὅλων ἔφη γενέσθαι, ὅταν τὰ πάντα κατελθόντα εἰς τὸ ἓν γράμμα, μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκφώνησιν ἡχῇσιν.

Thomassen translates κατελθόντα with “descend,” which of course is one of the meanings of the verb κατέρχομαι. So he takes τὰ πάντα to mean the Pleroma which descends onto a letter that is lost, as an image of Sophia.<sup>237</sup> But κατέρχομαι also means “to return,” a meaning that is very well attested from Herodotus onward, especially for the return from an exile.<sup>238</sup> The same is the case for κάτειμι, an exact parallel: it does not only mean “to descend,” but also “to return,” for instance from an exile.<sup>239</sup> The verb κατέρχομαι was therefore perfectly suited to expressing the return that takes place with the eventual apokatastasis, all the more so in that the return from an exile is precisely one of the examples that, as I have mentioned, Origen used to illustrate the meaning of ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι and to show that ἀποκατάστασις ἐστι εἰς τὰ οἰκεῖα (*Hom. in Jer.* 14,18): restoration is always a restoration into a state that is proper and familiar to the subject. This is why, rather than the descent of the Pleroma onto one letter that is lost, I would read in Irenaeus’s report the reference to the return of “all beings” (τὰ πάντα) to unity, symbolised by the “one and the same letter” and the “one and the same sound” that all will utter in unison. This is described as “restoration of all beings”: τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν τῶν ὅλων. This is depicted as a symphony, as the return of all to the unity of one single sound. Origen and Gregory of Nyssa will insist on the notion of the eventual apokatastasis as a unity of will and a symphony or harmony (essentially in that the wills of all shall be oriented toward the same point, i.e. God the Good); their concept of apokatastasis, however, universal and holistic as it is, seems to differ squarely from most “Gnostic” attestations of apokatastasis.

### *The anti-“Gnostic” Irenaeus: Universal Recapitulation*

Another author of the advanced II century<sup>240</sup> who influenced the development of the apokatastasis doctrine is Irenaeus of Lyons.<sup>241</sup> His thought,

<sup>237</sup> Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 244–245.

<sup>238</sup> 925 Liddell s.v. κατέρχομαι.

<sup>239</sup> 923 Liddell s.v. κάτειμι.

<sup>240</sup> In Gr. fr. 26 from *AH* 5 Irenaeus describes the end of Domitian’s reign (96 CE) as “almost during our own generation.”

<sup>241</sup> See D. Minns, *Irenaeus* (London, 1994; <sup>2</sup>2010); R. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London, 1997). See also M.A. Donovan, “Irenaeus in Recent Scholarship,” *Second Century* 4 (1984) 219–241; Y. De Andia, *Homo vivens* (Turnhout, 1986); B. Mutschler, *Irenäus als johanneischer Theologe* (Tübingen, 2004); M. Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation* (Leiden, 2008); Idem, *Of God and Man* (London 2009), 16–54; M. Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (Farnham, 2009), Ch. 2.

like Origen's, is universalistic and anti-"Gnostic";<sup>242</sup> the connection between Irenaeus's polemic against "Gnosticism" and his soteriology is rightly recognised by Johns,<sup>243</sup> and I should add that the same connection will be at work in Origen.<sup>244</sup> Notably, Hübner traced back to both him and Origen Gregory of Nyssa's doctrine of apokatastasis as Christologically grounded.<sup>245</sup> Recently, Anthony Briggmann has shown that in connection with his anti-Gnostic polemic Irenaeus used some tenets of Middle-Platonic theology.<sup>246</sup> He was in Lyons in 170 CE, when he succeeded bishop Potinus, who had died during the persecution of Marcus Aurelius,<sup>247</sup> and from Lyons brought a letter on Montanism to pope Eleutherius; he was still alive in 190–191. But he was from Asia Minor and when young he heard Polycarp, the "disciple of the apostles" (*AH* 3,3,4 [= Greek fr. 5 from *AH* 3]),<sup>248</sup> and Papias, a revelation of whom he reports in fr. 27–28 from *AH* 5. This is why D.I. Rankin locates him in the cultural area of Antioch and Asia Minor.<sup>249</sup>

Among the Greek fragments from *Adversus Haereses*—a collection that has been recently enriched<sup>250</sup>—, the most relevant to Irenaeus's soteriology

<sup>242</sup> On the importance of anti-Gnostic polemic in Irenaeus's theology see A.-C. Jacobsen, "The Importance of Genesis 1–3 in the Theology of Irenaeus," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 8 (2004) 299–316. And on Irenaeus's representation of Valentinianism see E. Pagels, "Irenaeus, the *Canon of Truth*, and the Gospel of John," *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (2002) 339–371.

<sup>243</sup> L. Johns, "Seeing Salvation: The Vision of St Irenaeus of Lyons," *Downside Review* 126 (2008) 263–284.

<sup>244</sup> See my "La coerenza" and, with further arguments, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism."

<sup>245</sup> R.M. Hübner, *Die Einheit des Leibes Christi bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Leiden, 1974), 125–129.

<sup>246</sup> "Revisiting Irenaeus' Philosophical Acumen," *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011) 115–124, with special ref. to *AH* 3,24,2–3,25,5.

<sup>247</sup> On this persecution, which was then probably revoked, see my "Protector Christianorum (Tert. *Apol.* V 4): il 'miracolo della pioggia' e la lettera di Marco Aurelio al Senato," *Aevum* 76 (2002) 101–112.

<sup>248</sup> According to C.E. Hill, *From the Lost Teaching of Polycarp: Identifying Irenaeus' Apostolic Presbyter and the Author of Ad Diognetum* (Tübingen, 2006), material from Polycarp is to be found in Irenaeus *AH* 4,27–32, and the *Letter to Diognetus* may be ascribable to Polycarp. I observe that in this connection it is interesting that this *Letter* (ch. 10) presents the αἰώνιον fire as working "until an end" or "until the end," μέχρι τέλους. This is noted by D. Scott Reichard in Beauchemin, *Hope Beyond Hell*, 205. This indicates that there will come an end to the fire's action.

<sup>249</sup> *From Clement to Origen: the Social and Historical Context of Early Church Fathers* (Burlington, VT, 2006).

<sup>250</sup> P. Boucaud, "Fragments de l'*Adversus haereses* d'Irénée de Lyon dans l'œuvre exégétique de Claude de Turin," *Revue d'Histoire de Textes* 3 (2008) 105–133, with critical edition of the fragments found in Claudius of Turin's commentary on 1 Corinthians and the re-edition of the fragments coming from Claudius's Commentary on Romans.

come from the last three books.<sup>251</sup> Book 3 is directed against “Gnosticism” and avails itself of Biblical proofs;<sup>252</sup> Book 4 refutes “Gnosticism” by means of Jesus’s words, with an anti-Gnostic and anti-Marcionite defence of the unity of the two Testaments. Book 5 completes Book 4 by adding testimonies from NT letters and focuses on eschatology: the resurrection of the body, denied by the “Gnostics” (but not by Origen), and the coming of the Antichrist and the chiliastic reign.<sup>253</sup> Origen, like many of his followers, was not fond of Millenarianism; however, unlike many of his followers, as I have mentioned, he did accept that Revelation is inspired and he commented on it in several places, interpreting it in an allegorical way, as I have already pointed out.

Now, among these fragments, the most interesting of all in relation to the development of the notion of eventual apokatastasis is probably fr. 4:

Christ will come at the end of the times in order to *annul everything evil*,  
and to reconcile again *all beings*, that there may be an *end of all impurities*.

The elimination of evil and impurity in the *telos* is one of the main tenets of the doctrine of apokatastasis, which here is suggested in the form of the reconciliation of all beings. As I shall show, a parallel expression of the same concept, and Irenaeus’s favourite, is that of the eschatological recapitulation of all beings in Christ.

Irenaeus’s use of the terminology of eternity is also interesting to analyse in this connection,<sup>254</sup> although the extant Greek is rather scanty. Irenaeus uses ἀίδιος several times, in the sense of “absolutely eternal.” For instance, in *AH* 1,1,1 this is a characteristic of the Gnostic Pre-Father: “invisible, eternal [ἀίδιος], and non-generated.” In fr. 1 from Book 5, Irenaeus describes

<sup>251</sup> A commentary on Books 4 and 5 is to be found in A. Orbe, *Teología de San Ireneo*, vols. 1–4 (Madrid–Toledo, 1985–1996). Book 1 and 2 pose problems of consistency: J. Kalvesmaki, “The Original Sequence of Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15 (2007) 407–417, observes a discrepancy between Books 1 and 2: either Irenaeus did not accurately recapitulate the contents of Book 1 in his preface to Book 2, or he wrote Book 1 in two drafts, first refuting only the “Valentinians,” then turning to a global heresiology. The second solution explains other oddities of Irenaeus’s masterpiece.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. J. Fantino, *La théologie d’Irénée* (Paris, 1994). For a commentary on Book 3 see B. Mutschler, *Das Corpus Johanneum bei Irenäus von Lyon* (Tübingen, 2006).

<sup>253</sup> On millenarianism in Irenaeus: C. Pasquier, *Aux portes de la gloire* (Fribourg, Suisse, 2008). English tr. of *AH* in *Irenaeus of Lyons*, by R.M. Grant (London, 1997); German and French tr.: Irenäus von Lyon *Adversus haereses* = *Gegen die Häresien*, übers. und eingel. von N. Brox (Freiburg i.B., 2001); Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies: dénonciation et réfutation de la gnose au nom menteur*, tr. par A. Rousseau (Paris, 2001). As for his *Epideixis*, see Irenaeus’s *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A Theological Commentary and Translation*, by I.M. Mackenzie, with tr. of the *Epideixis* by J.A. Robinson (Aldershot, 2002).

<sup>254</sup> See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new ed., 92–94.



Christ-Logos as *ἄϊδιος*. The absolute eternity expressed by this term pertains to God. He also uses *αἰώνιος*, especially in reminiscences from Scripture, for instance to indicate life in the world to come and the fire in the world to come. Thus, in fr. 4 from Book 5 of *AH* “life *αἰώνιος*” is the future life as a gift of God given through Jesus Christ (cf. fr. 5). In *AH* 1,2,1, Irenaeus paraphrases the Gospels observing that Christ will send the wicked “into the fire of the world to come [*αἰώνιον*],” whereas “upon the just, the holy, those who have obeyed his commandments and have remained in their love for him from the beginning, and those who have converted in this life, Christ will bestow life and will give them incorruptibility, and will grant them glory in the future world [*αἰώνιος*].” Similarly, the fire that is prepared for those who will be placed to the left of the Lord at the judgement is called *αἰώνιον* in fr. 27 from Book 4.<sup>255</sup> In Irenaeus, fire, death, and punishment in the world to come are never said to be *ἄϊδια*, but only *αἰώνια*.<sup>256</sup> And in *AH* 1,4 Irenaeus affirms that God “has been generous toward the angels who transgressed in apostasy, and with the human beings who have disobeyed him.”

Like Clement, Bardaisan, and Origen shortly after him, Irenaeus too prefers therapeutic to retributive punishments. Even heavy sufferings have a therapeutic and educative function, aiming at salvation. In *AH* 3,20,1, Irenaeus states that the human being, even after the fall, will not perish, thanks to God’s mercy, which “rescues it from the belly of hell”:

Thus, God was patient when the human being was stained by sin, since he foresaw that by means of the Logos it would attain victory. In the same way, he patiently forbore that Jonas was swallowed by the whale, not that he should be digested and perish, but that, once allowed to exit again, he might be more subject to God and glorify more to One who had given him such an unexpected liberation, and he might bring the inhabitants of Nineveh to an enduring repentance. In this way, impressed by that miracle, they would obey the Lord, who would *liberate them from death* [...] In the same way, from the beginning God did not permit that humanity might be engulfed by the big whale that was the agent of transgression [*sc.* the devil], not

<sup>255</sup> In fr. 18 from Book 5 of *AH*, too, the *αἰώνιον* fire is mentioned, and elsewhere.

<sup>256</sup> Irenaeus uses *αἰώνιος* in the sense of *ἄϊδιος* or “absolutely eternal” only when he is reporting the ideas and terminology of heretics, especially “Gnostics” (who drew it from Plato). For instance, in *AH* 1,10,1 the Demiurge is said to copy that which is “infinite, eternal [*αἰώνιον*], unlimited, and without time and, unable to reproduce its stability and eternity [*τὸ ... ἄϊδιον*], he unfolded its eternity [*τὸ αἰώνιον*] in times and moments and numbers of many years.” This is clearly the *αἰών* terminology of the Platonic tradition. Within it, *αἰώνιος* means “eternal” in a transcendental, non-temporal sense, or is used as a synonym of *ἄϊδιος*. On this use, peculiar to Plato and the Platonic tradition, see Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new ed., 12–28.

that humanity might die straight away, once engulfed in that way, but in anticipation and preparation of the *plan of salvation*, realised by the Logos [...] that humanity might rise from the dead and glorify God and repeat the discourse pronounced by Jonah in prophecy, “In my affliction I cried out toward the Lord my God, and he listened to me and *rescued me from the belly of hell*,” and might continue to glorify God forever and to incessantly thank him for that salvation that it had received from God.

In §2 Irenaeus goes on to declare that the aim of God’s long-lasting forbearance is “that humanity, passing through everything and acquiring the knowledge of moral discipline, and then obtaining the resurrection from the dead, and learning by experience which the source of its liberation is, may live eternally in a state of gratitude toward the Lord, after receiving from him the gift of incorruptibility, that they might love God even more.” The *telos* for human beings is a life of gratitude for God, after vicissitudes that are useful for their education. Origen will remember this.

Indeed, the way in which Irenaeus conceives of the physical death decreed by God after the fall, as something beneficial to humanity and aimed at sparing it an eternal permanence in sin and therefore an eternal permanence in punishment, is perfectly in line with the theory of apokatastasis and with the notion of physical death as a gift from God aimed at avoiding an eternal condemnation that will be typical of Origenian thinkers such as Methodius and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>257</sup> Irenaeus is clear in *AH* 3,23,6: God chased Adam out of Paradise, far from the tree of life, because he had mercy upon him and wanted him not to continue always to be a sinner, and wanted the sin that imprisoned him not to be immortal, and evil not to be without end or remedy.

In fr. 14 from Book 5 he declares: “What is mortal is devoured by life, that flesh may no longer be dead, but alive, praising God, who has prepared us exactly to this [εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο].” Such a preparation is a perfecting that may even involve severe suffering, but in a therapeutic and instructive perspective. This is further reinforced by Irenaeus’s parallel—also dear to Clement and Origen—between God and a physician. In the same way, Christ is presented as a physician in fr. 15 from Book 5: Christ, “by eliminating humanity’s disobedience, which originally took place in a piece of wood, ‘made himself obedience even to death, and death on a cross,’ thus healing through obedience the disobedience that took place in that piece of wood.” Irenaeus cherishes the image of Christ-Physician: “for this reason Paul declares: ‘God has encompassed all in incredulity in order to bestow mercy upon all.’ He

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<sup>257</sup> See below in the following Chapters, the sections on Methodius and Gregory Nyssen.

says so with reference to humanity, who disobeyed God and was chased away from eternal life, but then obtained mercy, receiving by means of the Son of God that adoption which was realised by Him.” The Scriptural reference is to Rom 11:28–32, significantly one of the most universalistic passages in Paul’s soteriology.

In *AH* 3,20,4 Irenaeus suggests, through a quotation of the prophet Micah, that what will be destroyed will be sin rather than sinners, that sinners may attain purification: God “will have mercy upon us, and will *destroy our iniquities* and chase our sins into the depths of the sea.” In fr. 23 of Book 5 (= 5,28), in an eschatological frame, Irenaeus declares: “Even tribulation is necessary for those who are saved, that, once, so to say, *refined* [λεπτυνθέντες] and lumped through the suffering for the Logos of God, and burnt by fire, they may be worthy of the banquet of the king.” Sufferings aim at the spiritual maturation of humanity and its salvation (*ibid.*): “All this turns out to happen for the sake of humanity, which is saved, in order to have *its free will mature toward immortality*, to prepare it and make it more capable of submitting to God.” Immature human free will, instead of being doomed to perdition, is made mature. This notion of the maturation of human free will with a view to immortality returns in the *Scholium in Apocalypsin* 38 ascribed to Origen, which may be a quotation from Irenaeus. The eventual submission of humanity to God is a reference to Paul’s eschatological revelation in 1 Cor 15:24–28, which is also a very universalistic passage, concluding with the presence of God as “all in all.” This will be one of the favourite passages of Origen in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis.

Besides the medical and therapeutic imagery, Irenaeus has also recourse to the metaphor of the teacher, indicating God and especially Christ-Logos, much in the same way as Clement and Origen will do. Christ as διδάσκαλος appears right at the beginning of Book 5 of *AH*, fr. 1:

It is necessary to follow the only trustworthy and truthful Teacher, the Logos of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord. In his incommensurable love, he has become what we are, in order to *make us what he is himself*. Indeed, we could not have learnt God’s things unless our *Teacher*, who is the Logos, had not become a human being. For no other child could have expounded the Father’s truth, besides his eternal Logos.

The idea that Christ had to become human in order for humans to become what Christ is—that is, God—will return in Origen, Athanasius, and Gregory Nyssen.<sup>258</sup> For Irenaeus, the history of salvation is the history of the

<sup>258</sup> See Steenberg, *On God and Man*, and my review in *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 16 (2012) 162–165.

education of humankind, starting from creation.<sup>259</sup> An important part of this history was given by the exterior obedience to the law in the OT and the interiorisation of the Law in the NT, with the acquisition of freedom, a theme that will soon be dear to Origen as well.<sup>260</sup> Like Origen, Irenaeus thinks of a paideutic action of God that accommodates to the stage of intellectual and spiritual development of human beings. The final level of this education will take place in the eschaton and will make the vision of Christ possible. He “will be also seen by all his own people, once sanctified and instructed in the things of God [...] Moses said that God is really a devouring fire for those who transgress the Law, and he threatened to bring upon them a day of fire. But to those who feared him, he said: ‘God the Lord is merciful and full of grace, forbears for a long time, and is very compassionate; he is faithful and keeps justice and mercy for thousands of people, and forgives the acts of injustice, transgressions, and sins’” (ibid. 4,20,8).

The action of Christ-Logos and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>261</sup> who contrast demonic powers, has the human being fully realise itself. And this realisation is “in the image of God”; the human being is also destined to acquire “likeness” to God, with a location of likeness in the *telos* that will be typical of Origen.<sup>262</sup> This paideutic view of the history of salvation may tend to minimise Adam’s sin, but Irenaeus also resorts to Paul’s opposition (in 1 Cor 15 and Romans, as I have expounded), between Adam, in whom all humans die, and Christ, in whom all humans will receive life.<sup>263</sup> The fundamental role of Christ in the resurrection and restoration of humanity in both Irenaeus’s and Origen’s thought is correctly underlined by Stubenrauch.<sup>264</sup> Indeed, for instance, in Greek fr. 25 from Book 3 of *AH* Irenaeus quotes Paul precisely on this subject: “As death came through a human being, the resurrection of the

<sup>259</sup> For the similarity of the notion of creation in Irenaeus, Origen, and Basil see A. Pérez de Laborda, “El mundo como creación,” *Helmantica* 46 (1995) 33–80.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. R. Berthouzoz, *Liberté et Grâce suivant la théologie d'Irénée de Lyon* (Paris, 1980).

<sup>261</sup> That Irenaeus distinguished Christ from the Holy Spirit and did not entertain a “binitarian” theology is argued by A. Briggman, “Spirit Christology in Irenaeus: A Closer Look,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012) 1–19.

<sup>262</sup> J. Fantino, *L'homme image de Dieu chez Irénée* (Paris, 1986); De Andia, *Homo vivens*; Steenberg, *On God*; J. Kaufman, *Becoming Divine, Becoming Human: Deification Themes in Irenaeus of Lyons* (Oslo, 2009).

<sup>263</sup> Cf. J.T. Nielsen, *Adam and Christ in the Theology of Irenaeus* (Assen, 1968); R.A. Norris, “Theology and Language in Irenaeus,” *Anglican Theological Review* 76 (1994) 285–295; D. Wanke, *Das Kreuz Christi bei Irenäus* (Berlin, 2000).

<sup>264</sup> B. Stubenrauch, “Auferstehung des Fleisches? Zum Proprium christlichen Glaubens in Motiven patristischer Theologie,” *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 101 (2006) 147–156.

dead also came through a human being.” And he goes on to quote Paul on the salvific work of Christ: “In Christ, you, who once were far, now have become close thanks to Christ’s blood; and again: Christ has ransomed you from the malediction of the Law, becoming a malediction himself for your sake.” In Paul, and in Irenaeus, the parallel between Adam and Christ implies that the consequences of the work of Adam and Christ extend to all humanity. The same idea is further developed in fr. 12 of Book 5: “Just as the one who was born to be a living soul, by inclining toward evil, lost his life, so will that same human being find life again, after ascending toward the Good and receiving the life-giving Spirit. For what dies is not distinct from what receives life, in the same way as what was lost is not different from what has been found again, but the Lord went seek precisely the sheep that was lost. Now, what was that died? Clearly, the structure made of flesh which lost the vital breath and remained without breath, dead. Thus, it is this one that the Lord went to vivify, that, as in Adam we all die as psychic, so shall we live in Christ as spiritual, after getting rid, not of the body moulded by God, but of fleshly desires, and after receiving the Holy Spirit.”<sup>265</sup> Irenaeus, who shares with Paul, Origen, Didymus, and Victorinus the threefold anthropological division into body, soul, and spirit (AH 5,6,1), also shares with Paul, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa the notion that the resurrection will transform the body into a spiritual body (AH 5,7,2). This will be its ἀποκατάστασις or restoration into incorruptibility (AH 5,3,2). The resurrected body will be an incorruptible, glorious, and spiritual body (AH 5,7,1–2).<sup>266</sup> That the resurrection in Irenaeus’s view will be not only physical, but also spiritual is strongly suggested by the declaration that it will entail the rejection of all passions. This is very important for the understanding of what Irenaeus meant with his idea of resurrection as apokatastasis, which will appear again in Gregory of Nyssa as well.

<sup>265</sup> On the opposition between physic and spiritual see G. van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology in Context. The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, and Early Christianity* (Tübingen, 2008); D. Reis, “Thinking with Soul: *Psyche* and *Psychikos* in the Construction of Early Christian Identities,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17 (2009) 563–603. Cf. AH 5 fr. 15: “For in the first Adam we offended God, because we didn’t perform God’s command, but in the second Adam we have been reconciled in that we have become obedient up to death.” Since Christ assumed all of humanity in himself, when he became obedient even to death, all of humanity became obedient up to death, in Christ.

<sup>266</sup> See P. Paciork, “L’anthropologie trichotomique et la resurrection de la chair selon Irénée et Origène,” in *Pagani e cristiani*, 465–476.

The centrality of Christ's role in all this is strongly highlighted by Irenaeus. In *AH* 4,2 he observes that Christ "is raised up from the earth on the tree of martyrdom, and drags all beings to himself, and vivifies the dead" (see also *AH* 4,24). In *AH* 5,19 Irenaeus presents the effects of Christ's salvific work in the following way: "The protoplasts' sin is corrected by the Firstborn; the snake's treacherous attack is defeated by the dove's innocence; the chains that had bound us to death have been unfastened." In *AH* 5,34 Irenaeus remarks that the hit inflicted because of Adam's disobedience was death, "but the Lord will heal this wound when he resurrects us from the dead and restores the inheritance of the forefathers."

What is more, in *AH* 5,21 Irenaeus ascribes to Christ the work of universal recapitulation or ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, which is so central to his thought, and which he also attributes to Mary:<sup>267</sup>

In his work of recapitulation he has gathered all beings together, waging war against our enemy, utterly defeating the one who at the beginning had imprisoned us [...] the Lord has recapitulated in himself the ancient, original hostility against the serpent.

In *AH* 5,32 Irenaeus interprets God's promise to Abraham: in Abraham, that is, in the faith, all the families of the earth will be blessed. The reign of Christ, after a thousand years, will resolve itself into that of the Father; the second resurrection will coincide with the assimilation to the Son, the direct contemplation of the Father, and the union with the Father. In *AH* 5,31, after criticising those who "disprove the universal resurrection" (*universam reprobant resurrectionem*), Irenaeus refers to Christ's descent to hell and claims that the just, straight after death, go to an invisible place prepared by God and wait there the universal resurrection, after which they will appear before God. In *AH* 5,35–36 Irenaeus envisages the first resurrection, that of the just, after the coming of the Antichrist.<sup>268</sup> The just will reign over the earth, which will be restored to its original, prelapsarian condition (cf. 5,32), and they will take part in the glory of the Father, in the Reign. They will enjoy communion with the angels, Jerusalem will be rebuilt along

<sup>267</sup> See M.C. Steenberg, "The Role of Mary as Co-Recapitulator in St. Irenaeus," *Vigiliae Christianae* 58 (2004) 117–137. On the Scriptural basis for Irenaeus's recapitulation doctrine see now T. Holsinger-Friesen, *Irenaeus and Genesis: A Study of Competition in Early Christian Hermeneutics* (Indiana, 2009).

<sup>268</sup> Fr. 23 from *AH* 5: "No wonder whether, with the collaboration of demons and apostate spirits, he will work signs by means of them, with which he will deceive the inhabitants of the earth [...] for the recapitulation [εἰς ἀνακεφαλαίωσιν] of all the apostasy over six thousand years" from the creation of the world.

the lines of the heavenly Jerusalem, and death and hell will return all of their prisoners. Humanity will rise again, actually and not allegorically, and “will be educated with a view to incorruptibility. It will flourish in the reign, in order to receive the glory of the Father. Then, when ‘all things are made new,’ it will truly dwell in the city of God.” Irenaeus mentions an “education” of those members of humanity who will still be in need of it after the resurrection. The casting of death and hell into the river of fire, which Irenaeus maintains in *AH* 5,35 on the basis of Revelation, implies that humanity will be liberated from them. In 5,36 Irenaeus’s train of thought gets even closer to that of Origen and concludes with 1 Cor 15:28, Origen’s favourite passage in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis: in the end “God will be all in all.” Irenaeus also shares with Origen the idea that none of the existing beings, in that they were created by God, will be annihilated, whereas death and hell will be, which are no creatures of God: “Neither the substance nor the essence of what has been created can be annihilated [...] But when the present state of things passes away, and humanity has been renewed and flourishes in an incorruptible state, so to preclude any possibility of decay, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, in which the new humanity will remain forever, living with God.”<sup>269</sup>

Like Origen, Irenaeus too, on the basis of Paul’s detail “each one in his/her own order” (1 Cor 15:23), postulates a distinction in the order with which all will attain beatitude, according to one’s merits. He interestingly leaves the possibility of an improvement open: “It is the gradation and order of those who are saved and go on through degrees of the following nature: they ascend through the Spirit to the Son and through the Son to the Father, and, when time comes, the Son will hand his work to the Father.” The reference is again to 1 Cor 15:24–18, which is quoted *in extenso* soon after, and which both Origen and Gregory of Nyssa will refer to the eventual apokatastasis.<sup>270</sup> God will be “all in all.” These “all,” in Irenaeus’s view, are “the unity or totality

<sup>269</sup> The last part of this passage is extant in Greek as well, in fr. 29 from Book 5. Fr. 30 (= *AH* 5,36,1), the last of the whole work, ends with the following promise: “This is why the Lord said ‘In the house of my Father there are many places.’ For all belong to God, who gives the most suitable home to all [τοῖς πασιν].”

<sup>270</sup> Cf. fr. 6 from *AH* 5: “since we lost God because of a piece of wood, so also did he become visible again to all thanks to a piece of wood, showing in himself the height, the length, the width and the depth, and, as one from the previous generations said, united the two peoples by divinely stretching out his arms, thus leading both of them to the one God: for two are the arms, because two are the peoples who were divided at the extreme limits of the earth, but one and only one is the head that is in the middle, because one is God, who is beyond all, through all, and in all of us,” ἐν πᾶσιν.

of the human nature,” which will fully recover its being the “image of God” and will attain the likeness to God (an idea that is common to Origen as well):<sup>271</sup>

The unity / totality of human nature, in which the mysteries of God are placed [...] the work of God’s hands, confirmed and incorporated in the Son, is brought to perfection. God’s offspring, the firstborn Logos, descended into created humanity, which had been moulded, that this might be included in it and in turn the creature might include the Logos, and might ascend to It, passing beyond the angels, and might be constituted according to the image and likeness of God. (AH 5,36,3)

Irenaeus’s work ends here upon the same notion on which Gregory of Nyssa’s *De anima et resurrectione*—a dialogue devoted to the apokatastasis argument—ends: “the image of God, that is, human nature.”

So also in AH 3,20,2–3: “He too became similar to sinner flesh in order to condemn sin and chase it away from flesh, just as now something condemned is chased, that he might invite humanity to receive his own likeness, making it the imitator of God, imposing on it the law of his own Father, that it might see God, and granting it the possibility of receiving the Father, since he is God’s Logos who dwelt in humanity and became the Son of the Human Being, so to make humanity capable of receiving God, and God capable of dwelling in humanity, according to the Father’s will. The Lord himself, who is the Emmanuel, born from the Virgin, is the sign of our salvation, because it was he who saved them [...] The good of our salvation does not come from us, but from God [...] We see that we are saved not by ourselves, but thanks to God’s help.” In 4,6,5–7 Irenaeus speaks of the condemnation of those who do not believe and do not do God’s will, but he does not say that it is eternal; he seems to conceive only demons as enemies:<sup>272</sup>

The Father has revealed the Son in order to be able to be manifested to all through him, and to receive the just who believe in God in incorruptibility

<sup>271</sup> For Irenaeus, just as for Philo and Origen, the human being is in the image of the Logos, who is the image of God. See fr. 15 from Book 5: “We said that in the beginning the human being was created in the image of God, but this was not evident, because the *Logos*, in the image of whom the human being had been created, was still invisible. Due to this, it easily lost even the *likeness* [τὴν ὁμοίωσιν]. But when the Logos of God became flesh, he confirmed both things: on the one hand, he truly showed the *image* [εἰκόνα], becoming himself what his image was, and on the other hand he firmly established the *likeness*, making humanity similar to the invisible Father, by means of the visible Logos.”

<sup>272</sup> See also Greek fr. 2 from Book 3: Christ “has united humanity and God: if it had not been a human being to win the adversary of humanity, the enemy would not have been defeated with justice,” in which “the adversary” and “the enemy” is the devil, death, and evil.



and eternal beatitude. Now, to believe means to do his will. At the same time, he will confine outside, in the external darkness, those who have chosen it for themselves, who do not believe and therefore avoid His light.

The voluntary and definitive choice of eternal condemnation, in its diabolic obstinacy, would seem to fit more demons than humanity, which is saved and recapitulated in Christ. In any case, even this voluntary confinement in the external darkness is not declared by Irenaeus to be eternal. The same consideration holds true with fr. 17 from Book 5, in which a punishment is threatened for tyrants, or with fr. 22 from Book 5, in which it is uncertain whether those punished are demons, and it is not clarified whether punishment is eternal or a purification: "The one who comes according to his own will recapitulates unbelief in himself; he voluntarily does what he will do also when he sits down in the Temple of God, that those who will be deceived by him may worship him as though he were the Christ. This is why they will be justly thrown into the furnace of fire." Interestingly, in *AH* 5,30 Irenaeus applies to the Antichrist the notion of ontological non-subsistence that Origen and Nyssen apply to evil: "He has *no existence*, and therefore his name has not been declared either, since the name of what does not exist is not proclaimed." Indeed, the name of the Antichrist indicates "the recapitulation of apostasy" and "of every error" (*AH* 5,29–30), but it also declares its non-subsistence and its complete vanishing. In fr. 23 from Book 5 all evil is said to be recapitulated in the Antichrist in order to be finally eliminated; moreover, the primary reference for the powers of apostasy are demons, not human beings:

In the beast that must come the *recapitulation of every injustice and deception* is realised, that, once *every power that has apostatised* has joined in it, as in a big ocean, this can be thrown into the furnace of fire. It recapitulates in itself *every manifestation of evil* which took place even before the deluge due to the apostasy of the angels, and also recapitulates every idolatry even from before the deluge [...] The name under which every apostasy, injustice, and evilness of the six thousand years<sup>273</sup> is subsumed [...] But for those who have done so *out of simplicity and without malice*,<sup>274</sup> it is natural that God's forgiveness comes, while, as for those who, out of vain pride, will define names that include the list of sin<sup>275</sup> [...] well, these *will not be released without having been punished*, because they deceived both themselves and those who believed them.

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<sup>273</sup> These represent the whole duration of the world for Irenaeus.

<sup>274</sup> These are human beings and not demons.

<sup>275</sup> The sin of pride is typical of fallen angels.

There is no mention of *eternal* punishment, though. What is more, that the primary reference is to demons is further indicated by what comes soon after: under the heading of those creatures who have not believed Gregory cites precisely demons: “They truly saw, and spoke of, the Son and the Father, but they did not believe in them.” Likewise, soon after, in § 7, Irenaeus calls those who refuse to believe and thus exclude themselves from beatitude “enemies,” but then he attaches this epithet only to the devil and death: “May Truth be approved by all and established by all, and receive testimony from all, both those who belong to her qua friends and those who are not in communion with her qua enemies [...] Christ receives testimony from all [...]: the Father, the Spirit, creation itself, human beings, apostate spirits and demons, the enemy, and, last, death itself.”

At this point Irenaeus inserts a strong break, aimed at introducing the work of Christ, which contrasts that of “the enemy” and death: “But the Son, administering everything for the Father, works from the beginning to the end, and without him nobody can attain the knowledge of God [...] Now, he reveals the Father to all, because in all beings, and throughout all beings, there is one and the same God, the Father, and one Logos, the only Child, and one Spirit, and one and the same salvation for all those who believe in him.”

Both for the eventual salvation and for human nature qua recapitulated in Christ the same unity is postulated. The same train of thought underlies the last two Greek fragments (27–28) of *AH* 4, in which Irenaeus mentions the Scriptural *πῦρ αἰώνιον* (not *ἄϊδιον*, thus not eternal). Moreover, Irenaeus opposes demons, with their obstinacy, to humanity, which will receive an instruction and be saved thanks to Christ. Indeed, this passage ends with the recapitulation operated by Christ and the defeat of the devil:

One and the same is the Father, who has prepared his own goods for those who rejoice in communion with him and remain subject to him, whereas for the devil, the initiator of apostasy, and for those who have apostatised with him, he has prepared the fire in the world to come. There, according to the Lord’s words, will be cast those who, in the Judgment, will be found to the left [...] But to those who repent and turn to God, he gives peace, friendship, and unity, whereas for those who are obstinate and do not repent and flee from his light, he has prepared the fire in the world to come, and the outer darkness, which are evils for those who fall into them.

Now, the Lord sew seeds in his own field, and the field is this world. While the workers were sleeping, the enemy<sup>276</sup> came and sew darnel amidst the wheat, and went away. Indeed, this angel has been an apostate and an enemy

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<sup>276</sup> This is the devil.

since when he began to envy the creature moulded by God and endeavoured to make it hostile to God: this is why God confined far from communion with Himself the one who had secretly sown darnel in his property—that is, who had introduced transgression into it. But He had *mercy upon the human being*, who embraced disobedience inconsiderately, *without malice*. And therefore the hostility that he wanted to address toward him He rather addressed toward the one who had sown it. God rejected far from Himself the hostility toward the human being, and rather turned it against the serpent [...]. And the Lord has recapitulated this hostility in himself, by making himself a human being, born from a woman, and by squashing the head of the enemy.

Therefore, the enemy, doomed to punishment and the exclusion from God's goods, is the devil. This has not succeeded in making humanity an enemy of God, thanks to God's mercy for the human being—who sinned because of weakness, but not out of malice—and thanks to Christ's work of ἀνακεφαλαιώσις. Likewise, in fr. 18 from Book 5 it is again the devil who is presented as obstinate and punished. And he is punished not by God, but by himself, for his own auto-exclusion from the enjoyment of God's goods. Irenaeus cites Justin as an authority for this notion, and insists that in the world to come fire is prepared for the devil, "who apostatised from God out of a deliberate choice, and for those beings who, never repenting, obstinately remain in apostasy." This obstinacy is certainly true of demons, but probably not of humans. Indeed, many are the passages in which Irenaeus says that only demons are enemies of God, whereas human beings have returned to friendship with God thanks to Christ, for instance fr. 21.

I have already shown how Irenaeus presents Christ as the author of the eventual recapitulation (ἀνακεφαλαιώσις, Eph 1:10) of the whole of humanity and of its final reconciliation with God, in full unity.<sup>277</sup> At that stage, human beings will truly become children of God and participate in God's immortality through the Spirit. The latter will endow human beings with God's likeness and therefore will render them "in the image and likeness of God" (AH 5,8,1). Christ's recapitulative work is well described especially in AH 5,20,2, in which Irenaeus is referring to the eschatological "Paradise of life":

recapitulating in himself all the realities that are in heaven and on earth. Heavenly realities are spiritual, whereas the earthly ones constitute the dispensation for human beings. Now, Christ has recapitulated in himself all this, by joining humanity to the Spirit, and having the Spirit dwell in humanity. He

<sup>277</sup> See also Y. De Andia, "Irénee, théologien de l'unité," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 109 (1987) 31–48; Steenberg, *Irenaeus*, 44–54.

is made himself head of the Spirit, and gives the Spirit, that it may be the head of humanity. For it is through the Spirit that we can see, hear, and speak.

Christ appears again as the “recapitulator” of humanity in fr. 3 of *AH* 5: he “would not have truly had the flesh and blood through which he has redeemed us, if he had not recapitulated [ἀνακεφαλαιώσατο] in himself Adam’s ancient moulded nature.” Christ “passed through all the stages of life, restoring for all the communion with God” and “truly eliminated the kingdom of death.” He

had to destroy sin and to redeem the human being from the power of death [...] that sin might be destroyed by a human being and humanity might be free from death. For, just as because of the disobedience of one single human being moulded from the soil all were made sinners, and had to renounce life, so was it also necessary that, thanks to the obedience of one single human being, born from a virgin, *all be justified and receive salvation*<sup>278</sup> [...] God recapitulated in himself the original wholeness/totality of humanity, in order to *kill sin*, to deprive death of its power, and *vivify humanity*.

For Irenaeus, the final vivification of humanity is not simply the resurrection of the body; it is the destruction of sin. Christ recapitulates all in himself and attracts all to himself, even if not all at the same time (*ibid.* 3,16,6,9).<sup>279</sup> By virtue of Christ’s salvific action, humans are no longer God’s enemies; the condemnation of the enemies seems to refer to the devil and his angels.

The recapitulation of the whole of humanity in Christ returns in fr. 23 of *AH* 4,<sup>280</sup> and especially in frs. 33 and 34, in the framework of Irenaeus’s

<sup>278</sup> The Greek is preserved in fr. 27 from *AH* 3. And in fr. 28 Irenaeus goes on: “This is why the Logos has become a human being, and the Son of God has become Son of the Human Being: so that humanity, by receiving the Logos, and the adoption into a daughter, can become the daughter of God.” The “many” become the “very many” or innumerable in 4,35,1–2: “Did perhaps God fear that the very many/innumerable would be saved, when more people could listen to the unadulterated truth?”

<sup>279</sup> “God’s only-begotten Logos, which is *always present to the human race*, united and mixed with its very creation, according to the will of the Father, and which became flesh, is Jesus Christ our Lord, who suffered for us and was also resurrected for us, and will come again in the glory of his Father in order to resurrect every flesh *and for the manifestation of the salvation* [...] *he came for the salvific economy and recapitulated all beings in himself* [...] *he assumed humanity in himself* [...] *recapitulating all beings in himself* [...] that he might *drag all up to himself* in due course [...] the Son of God, who died for our sake [...] ‘While we were still sinners, Christ died for us’: all the more now, *made righteous by his blood*, we shall be saved from God’s wrath thanks to it [...] all the more now that we have been reconciled *we shall be saved by his life* [...] He prayed to the Father that those who crucified him might be forgiven, *because he truly brought about salvation*.”

<sup>280</sup> “Our Lord came to us in order to recapitulate everything in himself in the eschatological times, not according to the measure of his power, but according to that of our capacity for spotting him.”

anti-Gnostic polemic, which is the same background as that of Origen's apokatastasis theory: "If Adam was taken from the earth, and his moulder was God, it was necessary that also the One who had to recapitulate in himself the human being moulded by God had a birth similar to the former's. Then, why did not God take a little soil, but moulded Jesus from Mary? That it might not happen that one was the moulded human being, and another the saved one, but it was exactly that one to be recapitulated, and the identity might be kept [...] All these are symbols of the flesh that was taken from the earth, and that Christ has recapitulated in itself, thus saving his own creature." A further parallel between Adam and Christ is introduced in *AH* 5,23,2, in which the universality of the recapitulation operated by Christ is made clear:

Indeed, by recapitulating in himself the whole of human nature, from beginning to end, Christ has also gathered in himself its death. From this it is clear that the Lord, obeying his Father, suffered death on the day in which Adam, disobeying God, died. Now, Adam died on the very same day on which he ate [*sc.* the forbidden fruit] [...] Therefore, the Lord, recapitulating this day in himself, suffered his Passion on the day before the Sabbath, that is to say, the sixth day of creation, that on which the human being was created, thereby offering to it a second creation through his Passion, the *new creation free from death*.

The work of recreation made by the Lord is effective upon the whole human nature, "from the beginning to the end," with no exclusion. In this case, if all human beings are recapitulated in Christ, the question arises of how the damned could ever be recapitulated in Christ, if they are to be damned forever. Irenaeus's ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις here is very similar to what Origen's ἀποκατάστασις will be. All the more so in that Christ is said by Irenaeus to take on the whole original κατάστασις (*formatio*) of humanity in order to restore it. This restoration will precisely be an ἀπο-κατάστασις. In fr. 19 from *AH* 4 Irenaeus uses ἀποκαθίστημι to indicate the salvific action of Christ in the *telos*:

Made manifest in the eschatological times, the Lord has *restored/reconstituted* [ἀπεκατέστησεν] himself for all.

Origen, who almost surely read Irenaeus, will say that the great resurrection/restoration of the body of Christ in the end will coincide with the resurrection/restoration of humanity. Indeed, in Irenaeus too, *AH* fr. 5, ἀποκαταστήσει and ἀποκαταστήσεται significantly appear in reference to God who will restore humanity in the end thanks to the resurrection (Gregory of Nyssa, as I shall show, will repeatedly define the resurrection human nature's ἀποκατάστασις εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον): "After being dissolved in the earth, it will be restored, reconstituted anew [...] God, in his will, shall restore/reconstitute

[ἀποκαταστήσεται] those who had once existed, thanks to life donated by him.” In fact, Gregory of Nyssa seems to have been acquainted with Irenaeus’s treatment of resurrection in fr. 5. Irenaeus connects again ἀνάστασις and ἀποκατάστασις in fr. 10: “Life will seize humanity, will chase death away, and will *restore* [ἀποκαταστήσει] humanity.” Likewise, at the end of fr. 15 from *AH* 5 Irenaeus refers ἀποκατέστησε to the work of Christ, who restores humanity to friendship with God, which was lost with the original sin. Humanity will be restored to its original condition, anterior to the fall, and even to a better state. The latter is an idea that Irenaeus has in common with Origen, who did think that “the end will be similar to the beginning,” but not identical: it will be better, in that the adhesion to the Good will be voluntary.<sup>281</sup> According to Irenaeus, indeed, salvation does not mean a return to Paradise, but the growth from Adam’s infantile immaturity to the maturity of “children of God.” And this growth, for Irenaeus as for Origen, cannot take place under compulsion, but thanks to instruction. Irenaeus himself declares in *AH* 4 fr. 20: “God never uses violence, but is always benevolent.”

Indeed, for Irenaeus humanity reaches perfection with the final ἀνακεφαλαιώσις; in frs. 23–25 from *AH* 4 Irenaeus explains the reason why God did not grant perfection to humans from the very beginning: it is not because only some of them deserve it, but rather because humanity, at the beginning, was not yet mature enough to receive it. This is a notion that is close to Origen’s own idea of the beginning and the end, which are similar, but the end is even much better because of the full maturation it implies. According to Irenaeus, too, humanity will be mature enough to receive perfection only in the end, when it will receive it fully and without exclusion. This perfection consists in “seeing God,” and “the vision of God produces incorruptibility, and incorruptibility makes beings close to God.” One may note that this is very difficult to apply to persons who are eternally damned. What is more, all this in Irenaeus’s view will happen thanks to Christ, who is the principle of unity in the Spirit<sup>282</sup> and the source of every salvation (in the above-quoted *AH* 5,20,2; cf. *Dem.* 34). This is why Irenaeus calls Christ “the Logos of God and *Saviour of all* [σωτὴρ πάντων]” (Greek fr. 9 from *AH* 3) and affirms

<sup>281</sup> On the notion of human free will in Irenaeus see E.P. Meijering, “Irenaeus’ Relation to Philosophy in the Light of his Concept of Free Will,” in *Romanitas et Christianitas. Studia J.H. Waszink oblata*, ed. W. den Boer (Amsterdam, 1973), 221–232; see also K. Ward, “Freedom and the Irenaean Theodicy,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (1969) 249–254.

<sup>282</sup> Eternal life and salvation are connected to the *pneuma* given by God to humanity, whereas the vital breath, the natural *pnoē*, is given to all creatures: see fr. 11 from *AH* 5, where Irenaeus also declares that the Spirit will never abandon humanity.

that “one and the same is God the Saviour and Christ resuscitated from the dead,” and that God “resuscitated Jesus and in him gave salvation to human beings” (ibid. frs. 14 and 16). The way in which Christ has saved humanity is explained in fr. 2 from Book 5: “The Lord redeemed us with his blood and has given his soul for ours, and his flesh for ours.” Origen will especially develop this notion of the soul of Christ, a constituent of his humanity together with his body.<sup>283</sup> This universally salvific action of Christ, which gives a certain and stable salvation, is explained by his role as a mediator: “If God had not given salvation, we could not have had it with certainty. And if humanity were not unified with God, it could not participate in incorruptibility. For the mediator between God and humanity thanks to his affinity with both, has led both parts to affection and concord.” Christ’s work of mediation and recapitulation is also described in fr. 9 from *AH* 4: “God became one of the human beings in order to join the end to the beginning, that is, humanity to God.” The same idea is further elaborated in fr. 15: “How could they be saved, if God had not operated their salvation on earth? Or how could humanity reach God, if God had not reached humanity?” Clearly, God has reached humanity and has operated its salvation through Christ.<sup>284</sup> In *AH* 5,20,1, the universally salvific action of Christ is extended to the Church, which

is handed the light of God, and therefore the Wisdom of God, through which it *saves all human beings*.

Universalistic expressions are frequent in Irenaeus’s work. In fr. 23 from *AH* 3 he insists that Christ got incarnated in a human being and “accomplished the whole salvific economy for the sake of humanity.” At the end of fr. 10 from Book 5 he states: “the Lord has eliminated every tear from *every* [πάν] visage.”

Irenaeus does not formulate a doctrine of universal salvation, nor a theory of universal apokatastasis. However, he does introduce elements that point to the doctrine of apokatastasis and very probably inspired those who formulated it after him, such as Clement and especially Origen. The most important are certainly his notion of ἀνακεφαλαίωσις, his characterisation

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<sup>283</sup> See my “Atticus and Origen on the Soul of God the Creator: From the Pagan to the Christian Side of Middle Platonism,” *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* 10 (2011) 13–35; “Gesù Cristo come entità mostruosa e ibrida in rappresentazioni pagane e cristiane tra II e III secolo,” in *Costruzione e percezione delle entità ibride e mostruose nelle culture del Mediterraneo antico*, ed. I. Baglioni (Rome, 2012).

<sup>284</sup> Cf. fr. 10: “Divine Goodness is indescribable: through it God is made manifest and vivifies those who look at it. For [...] to subsist in life depends on participation in God, and participation in God consists in knowing God and enjoying divine Goodness.”

of resurrection as restoration, and his idea of the maturation of humanity; moreover, I should indicate the salvific work of Christ as applied to all of humanity and the therapeutic and educational aim of sufferings inflicted by God. Also, Irenaeus seems to draw a sharp distinction between the demons, enemies of God, and humanity, which has been brought back to friendship with God by Christ. Definitive perdition seems to be reserved for those creatures who obstinately refuse God forever, without repenting, notwithstanding the continual work of illumination, teaching, and healing on the part of God's Providence and Christ-Logos. Many of these elements, as I shall show, are common to Clement and Origen as well, who both supported the apokatastasis doctrine. Now, they seem to have been preceded by Pantaeus.

*Pantaenus of Alexandria: Apokatastasis as the Return to Unity*

Pantaenus, who lived in the second half of the second century and taught in Alexandria under Commodus and in the early Severan age (Eusebius *HE* 5,10,1–4), was the teacher of Clement of Alexandria. He is said by Eusebius to have been a “Stoic philosopher,” renowned for his learning (*HE* 5,10,1).<sup>285</sup> Pantaenus taught in Alexandria until his death, both orally and in writings (*HE* 5,10,4). Eusebius in *HE* 5,11,2–5 identifies Pantaenus with the best of the Christian masters—mostly philosophers—cited by Clement in *Strom.* 1,1,11: Pantaenus “was hiding in Egypt” and was the last teacher found by Clement, “but for capacity he was the first.” He was the best among those who preserved “the true tradition of the blessed teaching” through an oral transmission from parent to child. Clement named Pantaenus as his teacher and exposed his Scriptural exegeses and traditions (*HE* 6,13,1–2); Clement himself presents his *Stromateis* (in 1,1,11,2) as notes from his master's teaching. Pantaenus's teachings and Scriptural exegeses—probably also allegorical<sup>286</sup>—were collected by Clement in his own *Hypotyposes*, where he also mentioned Pantaenus by name as his teacher (Euse-

<sup>285</sup> A. von Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 1 (Leipzig, 1893), 291–296, has all the *testimonia* on Pantaenus; cf. A. Méhat, “Pantène,” in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 12 (Paris, 1983), 159–161.

<sup>286</sup> See I. Ramelli, “Μυστήριον negli Στρωματεῖς di Clemente: aspetti di continuità con la tradizione allegorica greca,” in *Il volto del mistero. Mistero e religione nella cultura religiosa tardoantica*, ed. A.M. Mazzanti (Castel Bolognese, 2006), 83–120; A. Dinan, “Αἰνυγμα and αἰνιττομαι in the Works of Clement of Alexandria,” in *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010) 175–181.



bius *HE* 6,13,2).<sup>287</sup> Clement's designation of Pantaeus as "really a Sicilian bee"<sup>288</sup> alludes to his learning, not only in the field of Scripture, which is emphasised in the immediate context, but also in that of the liberal arts and philosophy, as is confirmed by the use of the bee metaphor in *Strom.* 1,33,5–6 as well, in reference to the indispensable formation provided by philosophy, preliminary to Christian theology (cf. 4,9,2). Not accidentally, Origen praised Pantaeus highly in a letter reported by Eusebius (*HE* 6,19,12–14), who had direct access to Origen's letters, which he collected, ordered, and kept in the Caesarea library (*ibid.* 6,36,3). In this letter Origen felt the need to defend himself for his interest in philosophy, clearly because of accusations levelled against him already during his life for being a Christian philosopher.<sup>289</sup> He explained that, while he was studying Scripture, he was approached by heretics, philosophers, and experts in "the Greek disciplines"; therefore, he had "to examine both the heretics' opinions and what the philosophers claimed to say concerning the truth." He adduces the examples of Pantaeus and Heraclas, both of them Christian philosophers in Alexandria, whom he imitates. According to Origen in this letter, Pantaeus had an excellent preparation in philosophy and Greek disciplines. That Pantaeus was well known to Origen is also testified to by Alexander of Alexandria, who in a letter to Origen says that he had come to know Origen through Pantaeus and Clement (*HE* 6,14,9).

Eusebius is our main source for Pantaeus's intellectual and historical figure. Indeed, apart from a passage at the beginning of the *Stromateis* (1,1,1–2, in which Pantaeus is not expressly named, but, as I mentioned, a reference to him as the last and best of Clement's teachers is highly probable), Clement's reports on Pantaeus are all witnessed by Eusebius, who also speaks of him and his mission to India in *HE* 5,10. Here, after saying that he was a Stoic philosopher, famous for his learning, Eusebius states that he was a teacher in Alexandria. That he was the founder of the Didaskaleion there is more doubtful; it is probably due to Eusebius's own desire to depict an institutional continuity, with the Pantaneus-Clement-Origen succession. Then Eusebius reports that Pantaeus also became "the announcer of the

<sup>287</sup> Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 109, in his account of Clement's *Hypotyposeis*, refers that Clement himself in that work attested that he was a disciple of Pantaeus: Μαθητῆς δέ, ὡς καὶ αὐτός φησι, γέγονε Πανταίνου. Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν αἱ Ὑποτυπώσεις.

<sup>288</sup> *Strom.* 1,11,2. Eus. *HE* 5,11,1 identifies this "bee" with Pantaeus. He was right according to T. Zahn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* 3 (Erlangen, 1884), 161; further arguments for this identification are adduced by I. Ramelli, "Osservazioni sulle origini del Cristianesimo in Sicilia," *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 53 (1999) 1–15.

<sup>289</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy."

Gospel of Christ to Eastern peoples, sent as he was as far as the land of the Indians.<sup>290</sup> According to Jerome (*VI* 36), Pantaenus was sent at the request of Indian ambassadors. It seems that they knew something about Christianity. Indeed, according to Eusebius (*HE* 5,10,3), when Pantaenus reached India, he found that there existed already Christian communities who possessed a Semitic redaction of the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>291</sup> Thus, it would seem that these Indian Christians felt the need for a more learned and “philosophical” deepening of the Gospel message they had already received, and to this end they turned to Alexandria.<sup>292</sup>

Pantaenus seems to have espoused a theory of apokatastasis that would embrace at least all Christians—unless he too, like Origen, who knew and praised him and was surely inspired by him, was convinced that all in the end will convert to Christianity and will therefore be saved. The difficulty with Pantaenus’s thought is that we have scanty fragments of it, mainly preserved by Clement. This is the relevant fragment:

Our Pantaenus used to say that prophecy, most of the times, uses expressions that have no precise chronological determination [ἀορίστως], and employs the present tense instead of the future, or, on the contrary, instead of the past [...] All those who come from the same race and have chosen the same faith and justice (or justification) will be one and the same body [ἐν σώμα], in that they will be *restored into the same unity* [εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν ἐνότητά ἀποκαταστησόμενοι].  
(ap. Clem. *Ecl. Pr.* 56,2–3)

<sup>290</sup> Eusebius does not say who the sender of Pantaenus was. Given his “institutionalising” tendency, one would expect him to mention the bishop; however, he does not. Indeed, it is unlikely that at that time Alexandria already had a monarchic episcopate and that this controlled Christian schools in Alexandria, as it was the case in Eusebius’s day, when the bishop of Alexandria controlled the Didaskaleion and appointed its director (thus, precisely in the time of Eusebius, Athanasius appointed Didymus, a faithful follower of Origen). Therefore, it is improbable—albeit not entirely impossible—that Eusebius’s source, perhaps Origen or Clement, mentioned an Alexandrian bishop as the sender of Pantaenus. Jerome, later, adds this detail, claiming that Pantaenus was sent to India by Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria (*VI* 36). Jerome provides this piece of information in *Ep.* 70,4 as well.

<sup>291</sup> This Gospel is said by both Eusebius and Jerome to have been brought to India by Bartholomew, one of the twelve. This is one of the two apostolic figures that tradition attaches to the evangelisation of India; the other is Thomas. A history of Indian Syriac Christianity begins precisely with Thomas, who is considered to have introduced Christianity in India in 52 CE: I. Yacoub, *History of the Syrian Church of India* (Piscataway, 2009). Cf. J. Fenwick, *The Forgotten Bishops* (Piscataway, 2009).

<sup>292</sup> See I. Ramelli, “La missione di Panteno in India,” in *La diffusione dell’eredità classica nell’età tardoantica e medievale. Atti del Seminario Nazionale di Studio, Napoli–Sorrento 29–31.X.1998*, ed. C. Baffioni (Alessandria, 2000), 95–106; *Gli apostoli in India*, Ch. 3; Eadem, “Early Christian Missions from Alexandria to ‘India’: Institutional Transformations and Geographical Identifications,” *Augustinianum* 51 (2011) 229–239.

Of course one cannot be entirely sure whether the terminology of apokatastasis was already employed by Pantaenus or was superimposed onto his thought by Clement. It is probable, however, that it was Pantaenus's, both for his philosophical formation—Stoic—and for his knowledge of the Bible, where he also found the lexicon of apokatastasis applied to eschatology in Acts. In the fragment I have quoted, Pantaenus seems to apply the concept of apokatastasis to the idea of the final return of all to unity (which will be developed especially by Origen and Eriugena) and to buttress this concept by means of at least two scriptural echoes: 1 Cor 12:12 (“one and the same body”) and Eph 4:13 (“the unity”).

The presence of an eschatological notion of apokatastasis in Pantaenus makes it more likely that Clement too, his direct disciple, had it. This is what I am going to demonstrate in the section on Clement. First, however, it is necessary to argue for the presence of the doctrine of apokatastasis in another thinker who might have been a teacher of Clement, and, in any case, had an impact on the Origenian tradition: Bardaisan of Edessa.

*Bardaisan of Edessa, Not a “Gnostic.”*

*Convergences with Origen and the First Theorisation of Apokatastasis*

The very learned Syrian Christian philosopher and theologian Bardaisan of Edessa (154–222 CE),<sup>293</sup> close to Middle Platonism, seems to present the theory of eschatological apokatastasis in a developed and coherent form, the closest to Origen's theorisation of apokatastasis, which came shortly after Bardaisan's own. Bardaisan's and Origen's eschatological doctrines appear indeed very similar—something that has only recently emerged in scholarship<sup>294</sup>—although regrettably little survives to illustrate Bardaisan's apokatastasis doctrine.

Origen and Bardaisan, who were almost contemporaries, shared, besides the doctrine of apokatastasis, a warm defence of human free will against deterministic theories, such as Valentinian predestinationism and astral determinism. Moreover, both of them were Christian philosophers between Middle and Neoplatonism, and teachers of philosophy as well, engaged in Scriptural exegesis and in the intellectual controversies of their time. Both

<sup>293</sup> See H.J.W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen, 1966); Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa*.

<sup>294</sup> In my “Origen, Bardaisan.” P. Crone, “Daysanis,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (third ed. Leiden, 2012), 116–118, expressly received my argument that Bardaisan supported apokatastasis.

Bardaisan at his school in Edessa and Origen at his own in Alexandria and then Caesarea taught Greek philosophy. Moreover, Bardaisan, like Origen according to Eusebius, received a Greek education in liberal disciplines and philosophy.<sup>295</sup> Both Bardaisan and Origen, furthermore, were accused of being “Gnostics,” in both cases on no grounds; both of them, on the contrary, wrote and fought against “Gnosticism” and Marcionism.<sup>296</sup> Origen and Bardaisan played the same role in a time when Christianity was endeavouring to acquire a cultural, and even specifically philosophical, status.

Since Bardaisan lived a little earlier than Origen, one might conclude that he preceded him in the formulation of the theory of apokatastasis. However, because his formulation of it is found in the *Book of the Laws of Countries*, probably written by a disciple of his, we cannot be entirely certain of his priority. Eusebius, in his excerpts from this Platonic dialogue in *PE* 6,10, states that it was composed by Bardaisan, and in *HE* 4,30 preserves its original title, *Dialogue on Fate*.<sup>297</sup> He says it was dedicated to an “Antoninus” whom Jerome identifies with Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher (*VI* 33). The aspects of this dialogue that are most relevant to the present investigation are: (1) the doctrine of free will, supported by Bardaisan against astrological determinism, and (2), at the end, that of apokatastasis. The latter had never been noticed by critics prior to a recent contribution of mine.<sup>298</sup> These two doctrines are deeply interconnected in Bardaisan’s thought, just as they are in Origen’s. Indeed, I even hypothesised elsewhere<sup>299</sup> that the doctrine of human free will was at the basis of Origen’s theorisation of that of apokatastasis, as is clear from *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* 3. For, here, he begins by contrasting the (mainly “Valentinian”<sup>300</sup>) deterministic theory of the threefold division of human beings and their different predestinations, and goes on to argue that the Bible supports the doctrine of freewill everywhere, also polemicising against the Gnostic and Marcionite distinction between the OT and the NT and between God’s goodness and God’s justice. Thus, he can introduce the

<sup>295</sup> Cf. Epiphanius *Pan.* 56.

<sup>296</sup> The main sources on Bardaisan’s refutations of Gnostics and Marcionites are Eusebius *HE* 4,30; Jerome *VI* 33; Epiphanius *Pan.* 56, and Moses of Chorene *PH* 2,66.

<sup>297</sup> The *Book*, as we have it in Syriac, is the product of a disciple, but it probably reflects his master’s thought, expressed in his work against Fate: I. Ramelli, M. Forschner et al., *Bardaisan on Human Nature, Fate, and Free Will* (Tübingen, forthcoming).

<sup>298</sup> “Origen, Bardaisan.”

<sup>299</sup> In “La coerenza.”

<sup>300</sup> Rather than “Gnostic” *tout court*. See my “Apokatastasis in Coptic Gnostic Texts” for a methodological discussion.

theory of the restoration of all rational creatures after their purification and instruction, as the expression of God's justice and goodness. In this way, the third book of *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* offers a clear outline of the genesis of Origen's argument for universal apokatastasis as based on his defence of human free will and personal responsibility against predestinationism. It was already clear to Rufinus, *Apol. c. Hier.* 2,12, that the theoretical basis, grounded in theodicy, of Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis was his defence of human free will against determinism and the conciliation of justice and goodness in God.<sup>301</sup> Now, the polemic against predestination and against the separation of God's justice and goodness, and the doctrine of apokatastasis are typical of Bardaisan as well.

The theory of apokatastasis is expounded at the end of the *Book of the Laws of Countries*, 608–611 Nau. After a refutation of astrological determinism, and after arguing that God is both good and just and has endowed each rational creature with freewill, Bardaisan expresses the apokatastasis doctrine, clearly connecting—like Origen—the defence of freewill and the polemic against the separation of justice and goodness in God with apokatastasis, which proves thus grounded in the theory of freewill. Each rational creature is really free, its freewill being not conditioned by astral determinism, but God does not allow this freedom to bring a creature to total perdition. Therefore, God allows rational creatures to govern themselves by their free will until the end of the aeons, but in the end God's Providence will eliminate all evil, according to its ontological non-subsistence. Indeed, to be found in evil is to find oneself in weakness and error, and such a state cannot endure forever. Therefore, all creatures, purified from evil, through persuasion and teaching and the filling of all lacks, will adhere to the Good, i.e. God, voluntarily:

For, just as human freewill is not governed by the necessity of the Seven [sc. planets], and, if it is governed, it is able to stand against its governors, so this visible human being, too, is unable to easily get rid of its Principalities' government, since he is a slave and a subject—for, if we could do all, we would be all; if we couldn't decide anything, we would be the instruments of others.

But whenever God likes, everything can be, with no obstacle at all. In fact, there is nothing that can impede that great and holy will. For, even those

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<sup>301</sup> *Dei iustitiam defendere et respondere contra eos qui vel fato vel casu cuncta moveri dicunt [...] Dei iustitiam defendere cupientes [...] bonae illi et incommutabili ac simplici naturae Trinitatis convenire ut omnem creaturam suam in fine omnium restituat in hoc quod ex initio creata est et post longa et spatiis saeculorum exaequata supplicia finem statuatur aliquando poenarum.* See below the section on Origen.

who are convinced to resist God, do not resist by their force, but they are *in evil and error*, and this *can be only for a short time*, because God is kind and gentle, and allows all natures to remain in the state in which they are, and to govern themselves by *their own will*, but at the same time they are conditioned by the things that are done and *the plans that have been conceived* [sc. by God] *in order to help them*. For this order and this government that have been given [sc. by God], and the association of one with another, damps the natures' force, so that they cannot be either completely harmful or completely harmed, as they were harmful and harmed before the creation of the world. And there will come a time when even *this capacity for harm* that remains in them *will be brought to an end* by the *instruction* that will obtain in a different arrangement of things: and, once that new world will be constituted, *all evil movements will cease, all rebellions will come to an end, and the fools will be persuaded, and the lacks will be filled*, and there will be safety and peace, as a gift of the Lord of all natures.<sup>302</sup>

Bardaisan foretells that divine Providence ("the plans conceived" by God "to help" all creatures) is salvific, that evil will be completely annihilated, as it is impossible for any being to remain forever in it; that the wicked will be purified and educated, so that they will voluntarily give up any revolt. The fools, Bardaisan says, will be persuaded, and not constrained to submit or destroyed. This is nothing but the eventual apokatastasis.

These notions will also be found in Origen's thought. Moreover, according to both Bardaisan and Origen, Providence does not force rational creatures' free will, but it acts in harmony with it, and yet does not fail to achieve the ultimate *telos*, apokatastasis: Bardaisan remarks that Providence does not compel creatures to submit, but rather instructs them; Origen says that "Providence is applied (by God) to all, in accord with each one's freewill" (CC 5,21). In both Bardaisan's and Origen's perspective, the theory of apokatastasis is grounded in ethical intellectualism. Indeed, the fact that Bardaisan, like Origen, considers apokatastasis to be enabled by instruction shows that in his opinion, too, the choice of the Good depends on a pure and non obfuscated intellectual sight. This is the heritage of Socratic-Platonic ethical intellectualism. Once all have obtained a clear knowledge of the truth and the Good, i.e. God—by learning in the other world, if necessary, what was not learnt in this—all will voluntarily adhere to the Good. Furthermore, apokatastasis is described by Bardaisan as "a gift of the Lord of all natures" or

<sup>302</sup> Translation mine from *Bardaisan on Free Will, Fate, and Human Nature*. As it does in Origen, "movement" here means an act of will. See e.g. *Princ.* 3,3,5; *Comm. in Cant.* 2,5,7–8: *quidve sit ipsa [anima] et qualiter moveatur, id est quid in substantia et quid in affectibus habeat [...] si boni affectus sit aut non boni et recti propositi aut non recti.*

beings. This is the very same way as it is described by Origen, with Pauline quotations: “eternal life is a free gift of God; for it does not come from us, but it is God who offers this present” (*Comm. in Rom. Cat.* 22,11). And for Origen eternal life is not simply life in a resurrected body, but salvation, which implies a spiritual resurrection as well, an idea that seems to have been shared by both Origen and Bardaisan.<sup>303</sup> Apokatastasis is also described as complete peace by Bardaisan, in the same way as Origen depicts it, e.g., in *Comm. in Io.* 10,39: “peace will be perfect after the years of the *oikonomia*,” and in *Hom. in Luc.* 36: God “has not yet established peace [...] there is still war due to the existence of evil, but there will definitely be an absolute peace.” Also, the eventual elimination of evil, one of the main metaphysical foundations of the doctrine of apokatastasis, is shared by Bardaisan, Origen, and then all the supporters of apokatastasis, especially Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius. Also, both Origen and Bardaisan maintained Christ’s core role in the realisation of apokatastasis,<sup>304</sup> an idea that returns in Gregory Nyssen as well.

Such striking correspondences between Origen’s and Bardaisan’s thought might be due to a common cultural environment, or—given that nobody

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<sup>303</sup> As documented by Ramelli, “Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah” for Origen, and *Bardaisan of Edessa* for Bardaisan. Here it is also demonstrated that Bardaisan’s purported denial of the resurrection of the body is not at all certain. As a further argument against this supposition I add that Bardaisan is the probable target of Aphrahat’s *Dem.* 8, where the view is criticised of one who believed in the resurrection of a spiritual and not a heavy body. This (as Th. McGlothlin suggested in a communication at the Syriac Symposium at Duke University in June 2011) may well be Bardaisan. This is the opinion ascribed to his followers: “We know of course that the dead shall rise; but they will be clothed in a heavenly body and spiritual forms.” And: “they say, the spirit of the just shall ascend into heaven and put on a heavenly body.” According to Aphrahat, they grounded their argument in Paul’s words, “The body that is in heaven is different from that which is on the earth.” The reference is to 1 Cor 15:44, which Aphrahat has just quoted: “There is an animal body, and there is a spiritual body.” That Aphrahat is writing with Bardaisan in mind seems to me to be confirmed by his reference to the interpretation of the kind of death that was decreed for Adam after his sin: a spiritual death (“For He laid a commandment on Adam and said to him, In the day that you shall eat of the tree, you shall surely die. And after he had transgressed the commandment, and had eaten, he lived nine hundred and thirty years; but he was accounted dead unto God because of his sins”). It is worth noticing that Athenagoras, too, another Christian Middle Platonist like Bardaisan and Origen (see D. Rankin, *Athenagoras: Philosopher and Theologian*, Farnham–Burlington, 2009), did not deny the resurrection of the body but rather wrote a *De resurrectione* in defence of it against “Gnostic” and Marcionite trends (i.e. the treatise fragmentarily preserved under the name of Justin). His technical interest in Plato is confirmed by the dedication to him of a work *Περὶ τῶν παρὰ Πλάτωνα ἀπορουμένων λέξεων* (Phot. *Bibl. Cod.* 154).

<sup>304</sup> For Origen see below; for Bardaisan see my *Bardaisan of Edessa*.

had ever clearly expressed the doctrine of the eschatological universal restoration before them—to some more profound connection. Origen might have actually known Bardaisan's ideas, just as many of his followers did. It is not even to be ruled out that Clement may have brought to Alexandria the knowledge of his ideas. For the Syrian Christian teacher met by Clement in the East before he became a disciple of Pantaenus in Alexandria (*Strom.* 1,1,11,2) might be Bardaisan.<sup>305</sup> Some kind of contact between Origen, Bardaisan, and their schools would help to explain how it is that Origen and Origenian authors, and only these, are appreciative of Bardaisan, while almost all other sources are hostile. Origen may have learned of Bardaisan's ideas, not only from Clement, of course, but also by other channels. As Eusebius informs in *HE* 4,30, Bardaisan's writings were soon translated into Greek by his disciples and Epiphanius adds in *Pan.* 56 that Bardaisan used Greek as well as Syriac. Soon after Origen, Porphyry read a Greek translation of Bardaisan's *De India*. Moreover, another possible link between Origen and Bardaisan may have been Julius Africanus, with whom Origen corresponded.<sup>306</sup> He long stayed in Edessa at Abgar's court as an instructor king Abgar the Great's son, and there he knew Bardaisan, as he himself attests in his *Kestoi* 1,20.<sup>307</sup>

Indeed, Bardaisan was praised and esteemed by Origenian authors, and only by them. Eusebius speaks well of him in *PE* 6,9,32, presenting him as a Syrian "who had reached the highest expertise in the Chaldaean doctrine," and in *HE* 4,30,1–3. Here, he praises his capacities and outstanding dialectic skills and refutations of Marcionites and other "heretics," among whom there surely were Gnostic groups: "Under the same reign there were plenty of heresies. In Mesopotamia Bardaisan, an excellent man and very well versed in Syriac, composed and published in his own language and alphabet dialogues against Marcionites and other supporters of different doctrines, in addition to a great many other works of his. His disciples—very numerous,

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<sup>305</sup> I find it unlikely that it was Tatian, because Clement disapproved of his encratism, whereas he describes his teachers, including his Syrian teacher, as blessed, worthy of veneration, and people who received the tradition from the apostles through oral transmission. The *testimonia* prove that Bardaisan based his ideas on Scripture but also on an esoteric tradition. See my *Bardaisan of Edessa*.

<sup>306</sup> See I. Ramelli, "La Chiesa di Roma in età severiana: cultura classica, cultura cristiana, cultura orientale," *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 54 (2000) 13–29.

<sup>307</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Edessa e i Romani tra Augusto e i Severi," *Aevum* 73 (1999) 107–143, *praes.* 135–136, and "La Chiesa." On Iulius's *Kestoi* see at least *Die Kestoi des Iulius Africanus und ihre Überlieferung*, eds. M. Wallraff–L. Mecella (Berlin, 2009).



as he strongly attracted them by means of words and argument—translated them from Syriac into Greek.” Eusebius also excerpts long passages from Bardaisan’s work against Fate in *PE* 6,10,1–49. Eusebius deeply admired Origen and, as I shall show in the section devoted to him, was not hostile to the apokatastasis theory itself.

Didymus too, another radical Origenian author and supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis, including the restoration of the devil, describes Bardaisan very positively. In *Comm. in Ps.* p. 181,8–9 of the papyrus (182–184 Gesché–Gronewald) he depicts Bardaisan as a convert from Valentinianism to Christian orthodoxy, when he became a presbyter: “Bardaisan lived in the past, in the day of Antoninus, the emperor of the Romans. At first he belonged to the Valentinian school, but he passed to the Church and became a presbyter.”<sup>308</sup> This depiction is similar to that offered by Eusebius in *HE* 4,30, in which also Bardaisan’s passage from Gnosticism to the Church and his subsequent refutations of Gnosticism are mentioned,<sup>309</sup> but Didymus even adds that he had priestly dignity. Apart from Theodore Bar Konai, Didymus is the only source to attest that Bardaisan was a presbyter (like Origen). But according to Theodore (*Liber scholiorum* 307,24–26 Scher) Bardaisan subsequently abandoned the Church, while Didymus praises him by saying that he remained in orthodoxy as a presbyter until his death, just as Origen did according to Pamphilus (*per tot annos magister Ecclesiae fuit* and in *Ecclesia catholica senuit*, *Apol.* 16). What is more, Eusebius significantly relates Bardaisan and Origen while quoting lengthy sections from Bardaisan in *PE* 6,10. Soon after these excerpts, he quotes Origen as well on the same subject, human freewill (*ibid.* 6,11). This connection drawn by Eusebius indicates that he was aware of the convergences between Bardaisan’s and Origen’s thought. He is also one of the few positive sources on Bardaisan; all the favourable sources on him, and only these, are admirers of Origen: for instance, Africanus, Didymus, Eusebius, and even Jerome before his “U-turn” against Origen.<sup>310</sup> Indeed, in *VI* 33 Jerome praises Bardaisan’s genius, his dialectical prowess, and his literary production against heresies.

Porphyry, too, may suggest that a relationship existed between Origen and Bardaisan and their respective schools. Porphyry knew Origen, when

<sup>308</sup> See S. Brock, “Didymus the Blind on Bardaisan,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 22 (1971) 530–131.

<sup>309</sup> “First he belonged to the Valentinian school, but then he condemned it and refuted a great many Valentinian mythological constructions. He believed he had passed to orthodoxy; yet, he did not liberate himself completely from the dirtiness of his old heresy.”

<sup>310</sup> On this U-turn see below, in Ch. 3, the section that I devote to Jerome.

the latter was in Caesarea or Tyre, Porphyry's homeland and the city in which, according to the *Suda*, Origen died.<sup>311</sup> Porphyry (*ap.* Eus. *HE* 6,19) criticises Origen for living "against the law" as a Christian, while reasoning as a Greek philosopher, and specifically a Platonist, in metaphysics and theology, and applying Stoic allegoresis to an unworthy book such as the Bible; he informs readers of Origen's philosophical readings: Plato, Middle Platonists, Neopythagoreans, and two Roman Stoics who allegorised Greek and barbarian myths.<sup>312</sup> Porphyry knew what Origen's favourite philosophical readings were probably thanks to his direct acquaintance with Origen, and/or his closeness to Plotinus, a fellow-disciple of Origen at Ammonius Saccas' in Alexandria.<sup>313</sup> Origen, whom Porphyry met some years after Bardaisan's death, might have made Porphyry acquainted with the work of Bardaisan. For, not only does Porphyry quote Bardaisan's *De India* in his own *De Styge*, but he also mentions him and adduces information from him in *De abst.* 4,17,1–2. While presenting the asceticism of the "Indian philosophers," the Gymnosophists, the Brahmins and the Śramana, Porphyry cites what he learnt about them from Bardaisan, who in turn had learnt it from Indian ambassadors: "What concerns them runs as follows, as Bardaisan wrote; he was a man coming from Mesopotamia, who lived in the time of our fathers, and met the Indians who partook in Dandamis' expedition to Caesar." What Porphyry took from Bardaisan, both in this passage on the asceticism of "Indian philosophers" and in that on the Brahmins' ordeal and their sacred statue which represents for him the cosmic Christ (read in the light of Plato's *Timaeus*),<sup>314</sup> closely corresponds to Origen's interests and ideas, all the more in that both of them, Bardaisan in his fragments from

<sup>311</sup> We cannot know whether Porphyry was a Christian then, as Socrates suggests in *HE* 3,23, but he is certainly not mistaken when he identifies our Origen with a disciple of Ammonius Saccas (*ap.* Eus. *HE* 6,19,6). See also Theodoret *Cur.* 6, 61, who describes Ammonius Saccas as the common teacher of Plotinus and Origen the Christian, and my "Origen the Christian Middle/Neoplatonist," *Journal of Early Christian History* 1 (2011) 98–130.

<sup>312</sup> See now Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy," also with previous bibliography.

<sup>313</sup> Origen may even be identifiable with the homonymous Neoplatonist repeatedly mentioned by Porphyry in *Vita Plotini*. See Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy," and "Origen the Christian Middle/Neoplatonist" with further arguments. E. De Palma Digeser agrees in "Origen on the Limes: Rhetoric and the Polarization of Identity in the Late Third Century," in *The Rhetoric of Power in Late Antiquity*, eds. R.M. Frakes–E. DePalma Digeser–J. Stephens (London/New York, 2010), 197–218 and *A Threat to Public Piety* (Ithaca–London, 2012), 49 and *passim* (my review is forthcoming in *Adamantius*).

<sup>314</sup> See my "Bardaisan: a Syriac Christian Philosopher's Interpretation of *Genesis* in the light of Plato's *Timaeus*," in *Kosmologie, Kosmogonie, Schöpfung*, ed. R. Hirsch-Luipold (Tübingen, 2013).

*De India* and Origen, value instruction and therapy over punishment and death penalty. Indeed, in *De Styge* F376 Smith (*ap.* Stob. 1,3,56) Porphyry in part quotes and in part paraphrases two passages from Bardaisan's *De India*, based on testimonies of Indian ambassadors. Both revolve around an ordeal directed, or performed, by the Brahmans. Bardaisan expressly praises them for avoiding inflicting death penalty and preferring instruction and education. For he shares Clement's and Origen's idea that punishments must be therapeutic and pedagogical, rather than retributive. Similarly, at the end of the *Book of the Laws of Countries*, as I have pointed out, he configures the eventual apokatastasis itself as the result of a process of instruction and persuasion of "the fools," and not of their annihilation, eternal punishment, or forced subjugation. In the second passage from *De India*, quoted *ad verbum*, Bardaisan highlights again the didactic and therapeutic treatment of sinners. Instead of being punished retributively and against their will, they spontaneously confess their sins, are purified by fasting, and ask the others to pray for them.

The presence of a follower of Bardaisan in the *Dialogue of Adamantius* is also interesting. The genesis of this dialogue is obscure,<sup>315</sup> but it was ascribed to Origen in the *Philocalia*, and therefore translated by Rufinus.<sup>316</sup> In this dialogue, the orthodox position is supported by Adamantius, whom Rufinus identified with Origen. A "Marinus" is one of the interlocutors of Adamantius and is presented as a follower of Bardaisan. I think that this Marinus is to be identified with Bar Yammā, an interlocutor of Bardaisan in the *Book of the Laws of Countries*, since Bar Yammā in Syriac means "Son of the Sea," which *Marinus* translates.

In respect to the relationship between Origen, Bardaisan, and their schools in Alexandria and Edessa, it is meaningful that a contemporary of both of them, Achilles Tatius, in his novel draws inspiration from Bardaisan's *De India*. Since—according to the *Suda*, his manuscripts, and the etymology of his name Τάτιος (probably from Tat, the Egyptian god)—Achilles was an Alexandrian, this seems to confirm that Bardaisan's work was known in Alexandria in the day of Origen. Indeed, the ordeal described by Achilles in his novel (8,12,9; 8,6,12–14) is very similar to those described by Bardaisan in *De India*. I believe that Achilles was quoting, not Porphyry, which would

<sup>315</sup> See here below the section on the *Dialogue of Adamantius*.

<sup>316</sup> Ed. V. Buchheit, *Tyranni Rufini Librorum Adamantii Origenis adversus haereticos interpretatio* (München, 1966); a new critical edition, with English translation, and a commentary, are in preparation.

imply a date toward the end of the third century or later for Achilles, but Bardaisan.<sup>317</sup> I have mentioned that Bardaisan's works were soon available in both Syriac and Greek. Achilles represents a further case of an Alexandrian intellectual who knew Bardaisan's work.

In the genesis of the doctrine of apokatastasis, therefore, Bardaisan would seem to have played a significant role, which has always been neglected by scholars. Origen and Bardaisan share major theological and philosophical doctrines, and even seem to have had some historical connection. The theory of apokatastasis stands out among the doctrines they share, and, what is more, it is related, in both of them, to the polemic against predestinationism and the separation of justice and goodness in God, and to the defence of human free will. Both of them, indeed, developed this doctrine in the framework of their polemic against Valentinian and astrological predestinationism, as is demonstrated by Book 3 of Origen's philosophical masterpiece and by Bardaisan's whole argument in the *Liber*. As Rufinus realised, the main problem was theodicy: to combat determinism and deny that everything depends either on fate or on chance, Origen, like Bardaisan, constructed an alternative theodicy grounded in the following tenets: the same nature for all rational beings, their freewill, and its consequences during the aeons, that is, the different conditions in which intellectual creatures are found during the aeons, depending on their own choices and regulated by God's justice, and at the same time God's providential action. This action is respectful of each rational creature's freewill, but it infallibly leads all to salvation, as a consequence of the final eviction of evil and as a gift of divine grace. Bardaisan and Origen, just as Clement whom I am going to treat now, show that the apokatastasis theory developed against the backdrop of philosophical debates on human free will, fate, the origin and destiny of rational creatures, and theodicy.

### *Clement of Alexandria: The End as the Hoped-For Apokatastasis*

Indeed, the first thing to be noticed is the complexity of the notions of apokatastasis that Clement received, as they were already present in various traditions with which he was acquainted:

- the idea of apokatastasis in Stoic philosophy, which was characterised by necessity and an infinite repetition;

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<sup>317</sup> Discussion in Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa*, 126–127.

- the notion of eschatological universal apokatastasis as described in Peter’s speech in the Acts of the Apostles, who connects it with the return of Christ and with the comfort and consolation coming from God;
- the “Gnostic,” and especially “Valentinian,” concept of apokatastasis, which, as I have mentioned, was generally neither holistic nor universal;
- the notion of an eschatological intercession of the just and of the salvation of the damned from the “river of fire” in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which Clement considered to be divinely inspired;
- Irenaeus’s concept of *anakephalaiōsis* and of *anastasis-apokatastasis*, which Clement very probably knew;
- Bardaisan’s clear concept of the eventual universal apokatastasis in which, thanks to instruction, “the fools will be persuaded,” “the lacks will be filled,” and “there will be safety and peace, as a gift of the Lord of all natures” (a concept that Clement may indeed have known);
- the eschatological notion of apokatastasis as a return to unity in Pantaeus, a notion that Clement knew very well and indeed is preserved precisely by him (whatever its exact formulation by Pantaeus himself was).

All of these traditions were known to Clement of Alexandria, a Christian Platonist,<sup>318</sup> a teacher of Christian philosophy,<sup>319</sup> who claimed that philosophy

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<sup>318</sup> I limit myself to referring to E. Osborn, “Clement and Platonism,” in *Origeniana VIII*, ed. L. Perrone (Leuven, 2003), 419–427; H.F. Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginning of Christian Apophaticism* (Oxford, 2006); Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy*, 57 ff. E. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge, 2005), argues that Clement is a coherent philosopher (xiii) who brings Christian faith and Platonism together into a profound unity—Plato’s and Heraclitus’s influence is not found in isolated parallels, but in the very structures of thought—, and cites 348 classical authors (5). One of the key problems addressed by him is salvation, which, in Clement’s view, depends on faith and knowledge. In Ch. 2 Osborn shows how Clement, like Irenaeus (and like Origen, I add), has the whole salvific economy depend on Christ. In Ch. 3 he highlights that Clement always looks for a Scriptural foundation for his arguments and that allegory does not eliminate the historical level of Scripture. This, I note, will be the case with Origen as well. For Clement, faith and reason are always consistent, because faith is faith in Christ-Logos (Chs. 6–11).

<sup>319</sup> U. Neymeyr, *Die christlichen Lehrer im zweiten Jahrhundert. Ihre Lehrtätigkeit, ihr Selbstverständnis, und ihre Geschichte* (Leiden, 1989), 227–228, rightly argued that Christian teachers such as Justin or Clement were indistinguishable from contemporary “pagan” teachers of philosophy. On the status of the Catechetical School in the time of Clement see C. Scholten, “Die alexandrinische Katechetenschule,” *Jahrbuch für Antikes Christentum* 38 (1995) 16–37; A. van den Hoek, “The ‘Catechetical School’ of Early Christian Alexandria and its Philonic

is a gift of Christ-Logos bestowed on the Greeks by means of good angels (*Strom.* 7,2,5,5 and 2,6,4) and criticised those Christians who rejected philosophy and only swore by Scripture (*Strom.* 7 *prol.*).<sup>320</sup> Perhaps he was also a presbyter in Alexandria. This, at least, is suggested by a letter of Alexander of Jerusalem reported by Eusebius (*HE* 6,11,6), and is repeated by Photius at the beginning of his entry on Clement in *Bibl. Cod.* 109: Ἀλεξανδρέως πρεσβυτέρου. The same Photius in *Cod.* 111, 89b Bekker, reports the full title he found in “an old manuscript” (ἐν τινι παλαιῷ βιβλίῳ) of the *Stromateis*: Τίτου Φλαβίου Κλήμεντος πρεσβυτέρου Ἀλεξανδρείας τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀληθῆ φιλοσοφίαν γνωστικῶν ὑπομνημάτων στρωματέων. Clement may, or may not, have been a teacher of Origen. The latter never mentions him in his extant works;<sup>321</sup> however, Origen very probably knew Clement, his work, and his thought, and Clement’s thought contains important seeds that were developed by Origen into a full-blown doctrine of universal eschatological restoration. As I shall show, Clement abundantly employs the very terminology of apokatastasis, with the terms ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι.

Clement was acquainted with the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which I have already analysed, and regarded it as divinely inspired, commenting on it in his *Hypotyposeis*. There, according to Eusebius *HE* 6,14,1, Clement commented on all the books of the NT,<sup>322</sup> including “the so-called *Apocalypse of Peter*.” What Clement found in the *Apocalypse of Peter* is the eventual liberation of

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Heritage,” *Harvard Theological Review* 90 (1997) 59–87; A. Le Boulluec, “Aux origines, encore, de l’école d’Alexandrie,” *Adamantius* 5 (1999), 8–36; A. Grafton–M. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book* (Cambridge, Ma., 2006), my rev. in *Adamantius* 14 (2008) 637–641; J. Tloka, *Griechische Christen, Christliche Griechen* (Tübingen, 2006), my rev. in *Adamantius* 14 (2008), 641–645; Osborn, *Clement*, Ch. 1. Cf. A. Jakab, *Ecclesia Alexandrina* (Bern, 2004), 91–106.

<sup>320</sup> On Clement’s appreciation of philosophy, besides what has been indicated in n. 318 and what will be indicated below, see also F.A. Sullivan, “Clement of Alexandria on Justification through Philosophy,” in *In Many and Diverse Ways: FS J. Dupuis*, eds. D. Kendall–G.O’Collins (Maryknoll, NY, 2003), 101–113; C. Broc-Schmezer, “La philosophie grecque comme propédeutique à l’évangile. Clément d’Alexandrie,” *Foi et vie* 107 (2008) 77–87.

<sup>321</sup> What is more, when Origen in a letter (*ap.* Eus. *HE* 6,19,12–14) must cite examples of philosophers who were also Christians and even presbyters, he mentions Pantaenus and Heraclas, but not Clement, who would have been an excellent and handy example. There must have been some strong reason for Origen to decide to keep such an apparently obstinate silence on Clement.

<sup>322</sup> Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 109, 89a Bekker, reports that “the *Hypotyposeis* discuss passages of the OT and the NT, of which Clement offers a concise exegesis and interpretation [...] He speaks several times about the same things, and disposes his thoughts here and there, without order, like a madman. His overall aim consists in interpretations of Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, St. Paul’s letters, the catholic epistles, and the Ecclesiasticus.”

sinners from the “river of fire.” Origen, too, knew that text and might even be echoing it when in *Hom. in Luc.* 24 he speaks of a “river of fire” near which Jesus stays. Whoever, after death, “will be still in need of purification, Christ will baptise him in this river and will send him across” to paradise. This is exactly the scenario depicted in the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

Another factor that must preliminarily be taken into account is that, as a result of his own anti-Gnostic polemic, Clement made much of human free will and responsibility, and at the same time of God’s grace and providence.<sup>323</sup> Like Origen after him, he did not consider human free will to be at odds with divine providence, which is universally and unequivocally salvific. It is precisely on this presupposition that Origen’s doctrine of apokatastasis will be able to be grounded in his defence of human free will against “Gnostic” predestinationism.<sup>324</sup> The same was countered by Clement as well. The main point in Clement’s polemic against “Gnosticism” was theodicy, which will also be the main concern of Origen’s anti-Gnostic and anti-Marcionite polemic. Repentance and conversion are helped by God, but this does not contradict the freedom of human will: “God wants us to save ourselves by ourselves” (*Strom.* 6,12,96,1–3). Clement often stresses that each one’s salvation must be voluntary;<sup>325</sup> at the same time he, like Origen afterwards, deemed God’s grace indispensable to this end, for instance in *Strom.* 7,38,5. The condition of each one is determined by one’s own free choices (*Strom.* 3,9,65), a point that Clement emphasises against Valentinian predestinationism, just as Origen too will do. Clement’s view, like Origen’s, is profoundly informed by his polemic against predestinationism and the division of humanity into “natures,” doomed in advance to perdition or salvation according to the “Valentinians.” In *Strom.* 1,17,83–84 and 2,12,54–55, Clement makes use of the Stoic and Platonic doctrine of the assent, which wholly depends on the moral subject (“that the assent depends on us is not only affirmed by the Platonists, but also by the Stoics,” etc.; Clement’s whole passage was included by von Arnim among Chrysippus’s fragments in SVF II

<sup>323</sup> E.g., in *Strom.* 1,1,4,1; 2,14–15,60–71; 5,14,136; indeed, like Origen, he asserted this of every rational creature, including the devil, who was not forced by nature to choose evil (ibid. 1,17,83–84). In 2,3 he maintains the freedom of human will in polemic against “Valentinians” (also in 1,20,115–116) and Basilides. On the non-conflictual relationship between human free will and divine grace and providence see now M. Havrda, “Grace and Free Will According to Clement of Alexandria,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19 (2011) 21–48. This relationship is best expressed in *Quis dives* 21,1–2: “if souls want [βουλομέναις], then God inspires them too.”

<sup>324</sup> Full demonstration in Ramelli, “La coerenza.”

<sup>325</sup> E.g. in *Strom.* 1,6,35,1; 2,3,11,2; 2,5,27,4; 4,26,170,4; 5,1,7,1–2; 5,13,83,1; 6,12,96,2; 7,2,6,3; 7,3,20,3,8; 12,1; 7,42,4.

992; see also Epictetus, fr. 9 Schenkl *ap. Gell. NA* 19,1; *Strom.* 1,1,4). The latter, however, is always assisted by divine Providence at the same time; human sins depend on us, but the Lord suggests kinds of therapy corresponding to the various passions (2,13,69). Πάθη, or bad passions, distinct from good passions or εὐπάθειαι,<sup>326</sup> must be cured by the Logos. For bad passions do not belong to human nature, but are extraneous to it (*Paed.* 2,84,1), according to an idea that will be especially developed by Nyssen in *De anima*, where he argues that πάθη are a kind of unnatural excrescences of the soul.

Platonic-Socratic and Stoic ethical intellectualism characterises Clement's thought:<sup>327</sup> evil is chosen because it is deemed good, due to a wrong evaluation that one fails to correct out of ignorance and foolishness. If a person chooses evil, this person is ultimately not free. Ethical intellectualism will be embraced by Origen—who insists that freedom is the freedom to do the good and presents evil as the outcome of deception<sup>328</sup>—and Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>329</sup> who even explains Adam's sin through it: the protoplasts ate

<sup>326</sup> See M.R. Graver, *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago, 2007); cfr. Ead., "The Weeping Wise: Stoic and Epicurean Consolations in Seneca's 99<sup>th</sup> Epistle," in *Tears and Crying in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Th. Fögen (Leiden, 2009), 235–252. Cf. R. Sorabji, *Emotions and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford, 2000); my review in *Aevum* 77 (2003) 217–221.

<sup>327</sup> The same perspective can be found in *Strom.* 2,6,26,5; 2,15,62,3; 4,26,168,2; 6,14,113,3; 7,3,16,2, and elsewhere. With no reference to Plato, the Socratics, or ethical intellectualism, but in fact with the same argument that rejection of the Good (God) does not arise out of a free will, but of an enslaved will, see Beauchemin, *Hope Beyond Hell*, 44. Indeed θέλεις in Clement is a faculty of the rational soul, not an independent faculty, and hinges on knowledge. On the problem of evil in Clement the best treatment remains P. Karavites, *Evil, Freedom, and the Road to Perfection in Clement of Alexandria* (Leiden, 1999), *praes.* 17–55 on evil in Clement and before him, and 109–138 on free will. On the latter in Clement see Havrda, "Grace."

<sup>328</sup> See e.g. *Comm. in Cant.* 4,1,20: *in esse unicuique animae vim possibilitatis et arbitrii libertatem qua possit agere omne quod bonum est. [...] Hoc naturae bonum praevaricationis occasione deceptum vel ad ignaviam vel ad nequitiam fuerat inflexum [...] per gratiam reparatur et per doctrinam Verbi Dei restituitur.* The "original sin" is construed as the result of a deception. The main activity of demons is exactly deception, aimed at leading the soul to assenting to something evil. The assent itself remains free, but if the evil thoughts inspired by demons are not eradicated from the soul at an early stage, these will grow ever more powerful and will determine the assent (which at this stage is almost no longer free). See e.g. *ibid.* 4,3,5–6: demons are *deceptores*. *Dum enim cogitatio mala in initiis est, facile potest abici a corde. Nam si frequenter iteretur et diu permaneat, adducit animam sine dubio ad consensum, et post consensum intra cor suum confirmatum certum est quia ad peccati tendat effectum.*

<sup>329</sup> And Plotinus on the "pagan" side of Neoplatonism. This is why in *Enn.* 6,8,3 he states that the gods are truly free because they determine themselves on the basis of their nature, which is the Good. Only the choice of good is free; the choice of evil is not. In Middle Platonism,



the fruit because this evil deed appeared to them to be good, since they were deceived by the serpent in their judgement. A punishment for such mistakes due to deception, obnubilation, and ignorance is considered by Clement to be right, but at the same time he also declares God's justice to be "salvific."

It comes as no surprise that in his polemic against "Gnostic" determinism Clement keeps quoting<sup>330</sup> Plato's declaration that "Virtue has no master [ἀρετὴ δὲ ἀδέσποτον]; the more each of us honours it, the more she or he will have of it; the less one honours it, the less one will have of it. Therefore, responsibility for this lies with the one who chooses: God is not responsible [θεὸς ἀνάντιος]" (*Resp.* 10,617E). Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, Christian Platonists like Clement and both acquainted with his works, will remember Plato's statement that virtue has no master and bears the stamp of freedom and will elaborate on this concept. In *Strom.* 2,14–15,60 ff. Clement observes that one's intention is essential to the assessment of one's responsibility, which does not subsist if anything is made out of ignorance or necessity (14,60–61; cf. 15,62–64); God has mercy even in case of voluntary faults, with a view to one's repentance (15,66). Against "Gnostic" predestinationism, Clement, like Origen, insists that not even the devil chose evil because he was compelled by his nature to do evil (*Strom.* 1,17,83–84, a passage surrounded by examples from Chrysippus's treatment of free will). Therapeutic imagery is employed here in abundance (15,69–71); it will be dear to Origen as well, and to most theologians who will support the doctrine of apokatastasis throughout the Patristic era and up to our day.<sup>331</sup> Clement insists on the pedagogical and therapeutic function of all punishments decided by God<sup>332</sup> and on God's "salvific justice" for each and every creature:

everything, both in general and in the single cases, is ordered by the Lord of the universe for the purpose of *universal salvation* [...] God is good and from eternity and *eternally saves* through his Son [...] the task of *salvific justice* is to lead each being to what is better. (*Strom.* 7,2,12; see also 1,17,86,1–2)

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Albinus *ap. Stob. Anth.* 1,49,37,91–92, had the fall of souls depend on "a mistaken judgment of the faculty of autonomy." The same formulation appears later in Gregory of Nyssa, *In Eccl. GNO V* 381,20 Alexander.

<sup>330</sup> E.g. in *Paed.* 1,8,69,1; *Strom.* 1,1,4,1 (cf. 4,24,153,1–2); 1,17,84; 2,16,75; 4,23,150; 5,14,136.

<sup>331</sup> Just an instance from contemporary theologians: the Italian Catholic hermit Adriana Zarri deems the notion of eternal hell "an insult against God's goodness" and observes that not even human justice nowadays admits of merely retributive punishments, but it seeks the criminal's reformation and reintegration. Hell's justice would be merely retributive, moreover in a disproportionate way. All will be saved in the end; merits will make a big difference in respect to the *antichambre* each one will have to do.

<sup>332</sup> E.g. *Strom.* 2,15,69–71; 7,16,102,1–3; 7,6,34,1–3 on πῦρ αἰώνιον, "otherworldly."

The universality of salvation is clearly stated; this is the work of God, and that God's justice is salvific means that it is always exercised with a view to the salvation of those punished. These punishments are instructive and corrective, they are in fact παιδεύσεις, and are aimed at having sinners repent, so to be saved: "The necessary corrections [παιδεύσεις], inflicted out of goodness by the great Judge who presides, both through the angels who surround him, and through several preliminary judgements, and again through the *definitive* judgement, *compel* 'those who have hardened too much' [Eph 4:19] *to repent* [ἐκβιάζονται μετάνοεῖν]." Repentance can therefore occur even after the final judgement. Even this judgement establishes punishments that, being corrective, force even the worst sinners to repent. After which, these corrections will have to come to an end. The very role of Christ as both a Physician<sup>333</sup> and a Teacher or Pedagogue, who instructs and corrects, is often underlined by Clement. Suffice it to cite two passages: "Just as a physician provides health to those who collaborate with him for the sake of health, likewise God, too, provides eternal salvation to those who collaborate with him for the sake of knowledge and upright conduct" (*Strom.* 7,7,48); "As our body requires a physician when it is ill, likewise our soul, too, requires the Pedagogue when we are sick, in order to heal its illnesses." Only after this does it require the Teacher, "in order to lead it and develop its capacity for knowledge, once it has been purified and enabled to receive the Logos' revelation" (*Paed.* 1,1,2,3).<sup>334</sup> It is notable that Clement first envisages a purification, and then an illumination. This double scheme, which is also typical of "pagan" Neoplatonic schools, will return in Origen, and then Didymus the Blind and Evagrius, as Blossom Stefaniw has correctly observed.<sup>335</sup> I find it interesting to add that it is present already in Clement.

The world is seen by Clement as a place of education, a παιδευτήριον: "this place of education which is common to us all." In the framework of this pedagogic and therapeutic perspective, Clement sees the πύρ αἰώνιον

<sup>333</sup> See also A. Breitenbach, "Wer christlich lebt, lebt gesund. Medizinische und physiologische Argumentation im 'Paidagogos' des Klemens von Alexandrien," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 45 (2002) 24–49.

<sup>334</sup> On Christ pedagogue and physician in Clement see at least J.L. Kovacs, "Divine Pedagogy and the Gnostic Teacher according to Clement of Alexandria," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001) 3–25, *praes.* 13; F.D. Aquino, "Clement of Alexandria: An Epistemology of Christian *Paideia*," in *Transmission and Reception*, eds. J. Childers–D. Parker (Piscataway, 2006), 270–284, *praes.* 271–277; O. Kindiy, *Christos Didaskalos. The Christology of Clement of Alexandria* (Saarbrücken, 2008).

<sup>335</sup> B. Stefaniw, "Exegetical Curricula in Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius: Pedagogical Agenda and the Case for Neoplatonist Influence," in *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010) 281–295.

or “otherworldly fire” as purifying and educative: “the fire sanctifies, not the flesh of sacrificial offerings, but the sinners’ souls, and I mean a fire that is not a fire which devours everything and tests, but the fire that is endowed with discernment, which spreads in the soul that passes through that fire” (*Strom.* 7,6,34,1–3). Divine providence works through either beneficial acts or punishments, but Clement is clear that the aim of both procedures is salvation, through repentance/conversion (*Strom.* 1,17,173,1–6). Indeed, it “provides for salvation,” by means either of good deeds as a benefactor or of punishments qua sovereign, but such punishments as to have the punished person convert. No case is contemplated in which God’s Providence does *not* save, in one way or another. And this salvific conversion is always possible, “both here on earth and on the other side,” given that God’s goodness is active everywhere (*Strom.* 4,6,37,7; see also 6,6,45–47). The possibility of salvific conversion even after death is inside Clement’s theology of Christ’s descent to hell, which will be important to Origen’s and Gregory Nyssen’s soteriology. The *Shepherd of Hermas*, which presents this descent as salvific, was considered by Origen *valde utilis et [...] divinitus inspirata* (*Comm. in Rom.* 10,31).<sup>336</sup> For Clement, “the Lord brought the Good News even to those who were in hell. Do not Scriptures declare that the Lord announced the Good News to those who had died in the Flood, or better had been caught in it, and to those who had been kept in prison?” The reference is to 1Pet 3:19–21, which was also commented on by Clement in his *Hypotyposeis*.<sup>337</sup> Clement goes on to state:

The apostles, following the Lord, announced the Good News even to those who were in hell [...] that, after repenting of their sins, they might be among those who belong to the Almighty God, although they happened to *confess God in another place, and they might be saved*, each one according to his or her own degree of knowledge. Thus, the Saviour is active, because *his work is to save*. And this is what he has done, by *dragging to salvation those who wanted to believe in him*, through preaching, *wherever they may have been*. [...] All those who have believed will be saved, even if they come from paganism, because they have *professed their faith down there (in hell): God’s*

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<sup>336</sup> It is unknown whether the sentence *si cui tamen libellus ille recipiendus videtur* is an addition of Rufinus in *Hom.* 1 in *Ps.* 37, 1, after Origen’s words *est autem quando erudimur etiam a procuratoribus et actoribus, id est ab his angelis quibus creditae sunt dispensandae et regendae animae nostrae, quemadmodum describitur in quodam loco angelus paenitentiae qui nos suscipit castigandos, sicut Pastor exponit*.

<sup>337</sup> See also 1Pet 4:6; Rom 10:7; Eph 4:9; Matt 27:52–53. On Clement’s view see H. Alfeyev, “Christ the Conqueror of Hell,” in *Christus bei den Vätern*, Hrsg. Y. de Andia–P.L. Hofrichter (Innsbruck, 2003), 48–68.

*punishments save and educate!* They exhort people to repent and want the sinner's repentance rather than his death [Ez 18:23; 33:11] [...] Even those who were out of the Law but had lived in a righteous way, thanks to the particular quality of their soul, quickly converted and believed, *even if they happened to be imprisoned in hell.* [...] Thus, it is demonstrated for sure that God is good, and the Lord can save with impartial justice those who convert, here or on the other side; for God's active power arrives not only here on earth, but everywhere, and it *operates everywhere.* (Strom. 6,6,45–47)

God's salvific action reaches even hell.

As Origen will do, Clement thinks that God's providence saves, though always respecting each one's free will. Absolutely no being escapes the care of divine Providence, whose aim is universal salvation (*Protr.* 9,87,6). In *Strom.* 1,17,86,1–2 Clement avails himself again of a therapeutic metaphor: even evil acts of will by people who have detached themselves from God “are directed by universal Providence toward a salvific/healthy end, although their cause would produce illness. But the main characteristic of divine Providence is not to allow that the evil produced by a voluntary detachment from the Good remains useless, without any fruit, nor to allow it to become harmful. For it is typical of God's wisdom, virtue, and power not only to do the good—since this is, so to say, God's nature, just as the nature of fire is to warm and that of light is to illuminate—, but also, and above all, to produce, from the evils excogitated by some, a good and useful end, and to handle those which seem evils in such a way as to be helpful.” So, Clement (*Strom.* 7,16,102,1–3) hopes that “the heretics” will be converted by God, even after death:

May these heretics, too, after learning from these notes, return to wisdom and turn to the omnipotent God. But if, like deaf snakes, they should refuse to listen to the song that is sung now, all recently, but is extremely ancient, may they be educated at least by God, by bearing his paternal admonitions; may they be ashamed and repent, and may it not happen that, behaving with obstinate disobedience, they must undergo the final and general judgment. For partial educative processes take place as well, which are called “corrections,” which we, who belong to the people of the Lord, mostly encounter when we happen to be in a state of sin: we are corrected by divine Providence just as kids are by their teacher or father. God *does not punish* [τιμωρεῖται]—since punishment is the retribution of evil with further evil—, but *corrects* [κόλαζει] for the sake of those who are corrected, both in general and singularly.

As I have mentioned above, Aristotle drew a distinction between τιμωρία, a retributive punishment, and κόλασις, which is instructive. The NT only uses κόλασις / κόλαζειν in reference to a correction established by God in this or in the other world (the κόλασις αἰώνιος), and not τιμωρία / τιμωρεῖσθαι. Clement

too regards punishments, not as retributive, but as educative processes on God's part. Even "heretics" and non Christians will be able to enjoy the beneficial effects of these educative processes in the next world. Clement thus leaves the door open to their restoration, and therefore, ultimately, to the restoration of all.

In *Paed.* 3,8,44–45 Clement calls again the πῦρ αἰώνιον that was sent by God the Logos against Sodom "full of discernment" (φρόνιμον). Clement also declares that the very punishment of that city is τῆς εὐλογίστου τοῖς ἀνθρώποις σωτηρίας εἰκῶν, "for the human beings, the image of their *well calculated salvation*." Salvation, therefore, may result from punishment, but clearly the goal of the latter is salvation. Clement adds: "this is the aim of threats of punishments [αἱ κολάσεις καὶ αἱ ἀπειλαί]: that we may fear the punishment and thereby stay away from sin." If one does not stay away from sin, one will have to be purified from sin. The latter, qua evil, must be eliminated, whereas the rational being created by God, qua good, must remain. Clement shared the doctrine of the ontological non-subsistence of evil with Origen, Gregory Nyssen, Evagrius, and most Patristic supporters of the doctrine of universal restoration. The sinner is a human being and a creature of God. But sinning is in the act, not in the (rational) being, and, as a consequence, it is not a work of God. Sinners are called "the enemies of God" just in that they have made themselves enemies of the commandments, which they have disobeyed, in the same way as those who have obeyed them are called friends of God. Their denomination comes to the latter from familiarity with God, and to the former from alienation from God, and both familiarity and alienation depend on a free choice (*Strom.* 4,13,93–94; see also 1,1,4,1). Sin depends on a free choice of one's will, and is not ingrained in nature; it pertains to ethics, not to ontology. This is a tenet of Clement's, and then Origen's, anti-Valentinian polemic, and one consequence of it is precisely the ontological non-subsistence of evil. Clement, like Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, was reminiscent of 1 Cor 15:25–28, which announces the eventual submission to Christ of all of his "enemies." Their submission will be tantamount to their salvation, as Origen and then Gregory of Nyssa will maintain.<sup>338</sup> The "last enemy," death, will not submit and be reconciled, because, unlike the other "enemies," it is not a creature of God, and therefore it is not good. On the contrary, it is evil, thus ontologically non-subsistent, and in accord with this, it will be destroyed, reduced to non-being.<sup>339</sup> The *telos* will then be accomplished,

<sup>338</sup> On which see Ramelli, "Christian Soteriology."

<sup>339</sup> See Ramelli, "1 Cor 15:24–26."

which is the *θέωσις* of all humans (*Protr.* 1,8,4). This, in turn, depends on Christ's "inhumanation," as also Origen, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory Nyssen will emphasise. Indeed, Christ "has saved us while we were already close to ruin" (*Protr.* 1,7,4) and always "encourages, admonishes, and saves" (*Protr.* 1,6,2; see also 9,87,6). The Lord of all is also the Saviour of all (*Strom.* 6,6,46 ff.; 7,2,7,6), and "almost *compels* people to salvation, out of a superabundance of goodness" (*Strom.* 7,14,86,6). The final unity of all beings will be a work of his (*Protr.* 1,5,2).<sup>340</sup> Like Origen after him, Clement thinks that each one must voluntarily adhere to the Good, and thereby attain salvation, but that, at the same time, Christ-Logos helps each one to reject evil and adhere to the Good, who is God, and this through therapy, purification, and illumination; in this way, Christ becomes a "sting of salvation." I shall highlight a similar position in an author well steeped in the Origenian tradition: Cassian.

Origen was almost certainly inspired by Clement in the elaboration of his doctrine of universal restoration.<sup>341</sup> His therapeutic and medical imagery, too, will be dear to Clement and Origen as well. He and Clement, in turn, seem to have been inspired by Philo and his notion of the restoration of the soul by therapy; Philo, though, did *not* believe in universal salvation, and I have endeavoured to explain this difference elsewhere<sup>342</sup> (moreover, Philo in some passages must have appeared to Origen dangerously close to the

<sup>340</sup> See F. Trisoglio, "La salvezza in Clemente," in *Pagani e cristiani alla ricerca della salvezza* (Roma, 2006), 639–659.

<sup>341</sup> J.R. Sachs, "Apocatastasis in Patristic Theology," *Theological Studies* 54 (1993) 617–640, section 1, is right to submit that Clement offered inspiration to Origen for his doctrine of apokatastasis, especially in respect to the therapeutic nature of divine punishments. He thus agrees with Daley, *Hope*, 44–47, and G. Muller, "Origenes und die *Apokatastasis*," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 14 (1958) 174–190. In the other sections Sachs takes into consideration apokatastasis in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, plus some hints in Gregory of Nazianzus; as for Clement, he highlights four significant elements: 1) divine Providence, in its supremacy and absolute goodness; 2) God's salvific project is directed both to every single individual and to humanity as a whole; 3) the freedom of human beings but also God's power of persuasion, and 4) the pedagogic and purifying aim of divine punishment. All of these elements, and many of those which I have added here, will appear again in Origen and be highly relevant to the construction of his doctrine of apokatastasis. See also W. van Laak, *Allversöhnung* (Sinzig, 1990), 39–40. Sachs, "Apocatastasis," 617–618 observes that the detractors of the doctrine of universal apokatastasis fear that this denies human freedom. I observe that Clement, Origen, and Gregory Nyssen, all assertors of this doctrine, are also adamant in emphasising the freedom of will of rational creatures—Clement and Origen especially on account of their anti-Gnostic polemic.

<sup>342</sup> "Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa," *Studia Philonica Annual* 20 (2008) 55–99.

Valentinian doctrine of classes of people who are good or bad by nature,<sup>343</sup> something Origen's theodicy could not admit of). I have also attempted to clarify, here, the multiplicity of Clement's sources of inspiration for his notion of apokatastasis, as I have listed them at the very beginning of the present section. Now a terminological and at the same time conceptual analysis<sup>344</sup> will allow us to gain even more precise insights into Clement's concept of the end of time and universal restoration. Unlike Justin,<sup>345</sup> and like Origen, Clement frequently employs ἀἰδιος, which conveys the meaning of absolute eternity, differently from the biblical term αἰώνιος, which means "eternal" only in case it refers to God. In *Strom.* 4,22,136, "the eternal contemplation" (ἀἰδιος θεωρία) is identified with the knowledge of God and salvation in the world to come (αἰώνιος). In *Protr.* 9,84,6 Clement takes over Plato's definition of time as a mobile image (εἰκὼν) of eternity, but with a meaningful alteration which is probably due to the influence of the biblical terminology: God is a "today" that is absolutely eternal (ἀἰδιος) and extends forever; it is "an image of the ages," αἰώνων ἐστὶν εἰκὼν, rather than Plato's "image of eternity [αἰώνος]." <sup>346</sup> For Clement knows that αἰών in the Bible does not at all mean "eternity." Αἰδιος, indeed, often refers to God or to what pertains to God, which is absolutely eternal; for instance, God's goodness and beneficence are such, as well as God's justice (*Strom.* 5,14,141). In *Protr.* 10,105,4, God is "the eternal [ἀἰδιος] giver of goods." In *Protr.* 12,121,2 the Son is depicted as "the eternal [ἀἰδιος] Victor," and in *Paed.* 1,6,27 as saviour and pedagogue, the source, by instruction, of a salvation that is absolutely eternal: "the teaching is perfectly eternal [ἀἰδιος] salvation of the eternal [ἀἰδιος] Saviour." <sup>347</sup> Future life will not only belong to the world to come,<sup>348</sup> but it will be strictly

<sup>343</sup> See, e.g., *Leg. All.* 3,75: "God has created some (human) natures faulty per se and blameworthy in their soul, but others excellent in all respects and praiseworthy. The same is the case with plants and animals." This idea is unacceptable to Origen from the viewpoint of theodicy. For him, if people are born more or less gifted, this is the result of antecedent causes (i.e. of each one's free choices in the previous aeon), and not of an arbitrary decision of God.

<sup>344</sup> Full analysis in Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 102–116; here I shall select and develop what is most relevant to the issue of Clement's notion of apokatastasis.

<sup>345</sup> On whose use of the terminology of eternity see Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 96–102.

<sup>346</sup> Unlike the Bible and practically the rest of the Greek tradition, Plato, followed by the Platonists, ascribed to αἰών the meaning "atemporal eternity."

<sup>347</sup> On Clement's *Paedagogos* see at least M. Pujiula, *Körper und christliche Lebensweise. Klemens von Alexandria und sein Paidagogos* (Berlin–New York, 2006).

<sup>348</sup> For this, Clement, like many other Greek Fathers, uses ζωὴ αἰώνιος and ζωὴ μέλλουσα, for instance in *Protr.* 9,85,4: "[piety] that bears the proclamation of life, both that in the present and that in the future."

eternal as well. This is why Clement often describes it as αἰδιος, as well as ἀ-τρειτος, “immutable” (*Div.* 42,20; *Protr.* 1,7,1, *Strom.* 7,2,10; *Paed.* 11,114,2).<sup>349</sup> As a consequence, the blessed themselves, who participate in this life, become like a “stable light, which persists eternally [αἰδιως]” (*Strom.* 7,10,57). Other expressions with αἰδιος refer to eternal life.<sup>350</sup> In *Protr.* 9,85,4, with αἰδιος σωτηρία Clement expresses the absolute eternity of salvation, as in a number of other passages.<sup>351</sup>

Indeed, Clement describes salvation as perfectly eternal throughout his works (e.g. *Strom.* 7,7,48; *Paed.* 1,8,65,2; 1,11,96,3), but, notably, he never characterises damnation as perfectly eternal (αἰδιος). Even in *Paed.* 1,8,74, after remarking that “the mode of the economy of the divine Logos-Pedagogue is various, with a view to salvation,” he adds that “it is appropriate even to inflict a wound, not in a deadly way, but in order to save [σωτηριως], and thus, with a moderate pain, save a person from eternal death [αἰδιον κερδάναντα θάνατον].” Even here, therefore, eternal death is in fact denied.<sup>352</sup> Likewise, in *Protr.* 11,115,3 Clement characterises sin and the darkness of error as “eternal [αἰδιος] death,” but in order to exclude it, as he adds straightforward: “But there is, there is, the Truth who has cried out that, ‘from darkness, a light will shine!’” Like Origen, Clement describes the future life both as strictly eternal (αἰδιος) and as pertaining to the aeon to come (αἰώνιος), but he characterises the fire of the next world only as pertaining to the aeon to come (αἰώνιον), and never as eternal proper (αἰδιον). When he quotes Scripture, Clement usually employs αἰώνιος, the scriptural term, whereas when he speaks in his own voice, he prefers αἰδιος, the philosophical term, but only in reference to God, or to life,<sup>353</sup> since God is ontologically eternal and life in the world

<sup>349</sup> See also βίος αἰδιος in *Strom.* 5,2,15 and τὸ αἰδιον ζῆν in *Paed.* 1,13,103.

<sup>350</sup> Such as “eternal awakening from toils” (*Paed.* 2,9,80), “the eternity of life” (*Paed.* 2,9,82), or “eternal repose” which is situated in the world to come (*Paed.* 1,13,102). Eternal life is an “eternal gift” (*Paed.* 10,94,1), or “the eternal [αἰδιος] benefaction in accord with God’s providence” (*Strom.* 5,13,87), and the permanently blessed state of the perfected soul, an “eternally [αἰδιως] looking at God almighty, face to face” (*Strom.* 7,11,68). Spiritual foods are “supplied eternally [αἰδιως] for the growth of the soul,” an eternal growth (*Strom.* 6,11,90). Likewise, in *Strom.* 5,11,70, the food for souls is truth, an absolutely eternal (αἰδιος) food. In *Strom.* 6,9,75, blessedness is described as that of one “who dines eternally [αἰδιως] and without ever reaching satiety in the inextinguishable joy of contemplation.” The exclusion of satiety will inspire Origen’s idea of apokatastasis, and Nyssen’s *epektasis* doctrine.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid. 10,93,2; *Strom.* 6,1,2; *Paed.* 1,6,27.

<sup>352</sup> *Paed.* 3,8,44 is a seeming exception, since here αἰδιος occurs in a quotation from Jude, in reference to the evil angels.

<sup>353</sup> In *Paed.* 1,6,29 the biblical expression “αἰώνιος life” is glossed with “αἰδιος life.”



to come will be a participation in the life of God, but never in reference to death, punishment, fire, or evil.

From the terminological analysis it also emerges that Clement, just as Origen will do, expressly refers ἀίδιος to the final apokatastasis. One example is *Ecl. Proph.* 57,2, in which apokatastasis is described as an eternal condition characterised by knowledge:

According to the Apostle, then, those who will be at the peak of apokatastasis [ἐν τῇ ἀκρᾷ ἀποκαταστάσει]<sup>354</sup> are those who were created first: and the first created are the thrones, although they are (angelic) powers, since God rested in them, just as he reposes in those who believe as well. For each person, according to her own individual degree of spiritual progress, has a certain knowledge of God, and God rests in this knowledge, since those who have known him have become eternal [ἀιδίῳ] thanks to their knowledge.

Knowledge, eternity, and apokatastasis are joined together also in *Strom.* 7,10,56,2–6. Here, Clement identifies the eventual restoration with knowledge and love and characterises it as an eternal contemplation:

Love [ἀγάπη] comes after knowledge [γνώσις], and inheritance (or: enjoyment) after love. And this is achieved when one depends on the Lord thanks to faith, knowledge, and love. [...] This completes what is not yet completed and what is already perfect, teaching in advance the future life that we shall have with the gods in God, once we have been *liberated from any chastisement and suffering that we (shall) have to endure because of our sins for the sake of a salvific education*: after the extinction of this penalty, *rewards and honours are bestowed upon those who have been made perfect, after completing their purification* [...]. After human beings have become pure of heart, in accord with what pertains to the Lord, *restoration* [ἀποκατάστασις] awaits them, in *eternal contemplation* [τῇ θεωρίᾳ τῇ αἰδίῳ]. And they will be “gods,” sharing their abodes with the other “gods,” those who have been arrayed first by the Saviour. Thus, knowledge leads forthwith to purification.

Gregory of Nyssa will likewise insist on the final liberation from the therapeutic and pedagogical penalty and the achievement of a state of freedom, honour, and perfection, which will be the restoration. Knowledge and love will characterise the *telos* for Origen, Evagrius, and Gregory of Nyssa as well. Clement is here expressly describing the eschatological state of “the future life.” The eternal contemplation in the end will be preceded by the purification of all of one’s sins through an instruction that will be “salvific” and therefore will lead to salvation, which coincides with “apokatastasis in absolutely eternal contemplation.” Clement, as later Origen and Gregory of Nyssa

<sup>354</sup> This probably means “those who will be the first to be restored.”

will do, describes the final apokatastasis as θέωσις. And, like Origen after him, he characterises apokatastasis as absolutely eternal, ἀίδιος, and not simply as αἰώνιος or pertaining to the other aeon.<sup>355</sup> For apokatastasis will follow the end of all aeons.

Clement treats the very doctrine of apokatastasis, also using the specific terminology of apokatastasis, in other remarkable passages as well. For instance, in *Strom.* 2,8,37,5 he describes God's Wisdom (the first ἐπίνοια of Christ in Origen) as the cause of all creation and of "the apokatastasis of the elect."<sup>356</sup> These elect are the true "gnostics," those who have reached knowledge. Indeed, in *Strom.* 4,6,40,2 Clement describes the perfect "gnostic" as a "peacemaker" who has subjugated all passions, which fight against reason, and adds that these gnostics "will be restored to the most loving adoration." The verb is ἀποκαθίστημι. Clement is describing the final apokatastasis of those who have become perfect. In order for this to be universal, all will have to become perfect in the end. When all have defeated passions and have become perfect "gnostics," all will be able to be restored. Now, it is crucial that exactly the universality of the final restoration is attested in *Strom.* 3,9,63,4:

It is necessary that generation and corruption exist in creation, until all the elects have appeared, and thus the restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] takes place, so that even substances themselves *return to their original seat*.

Not only the elect, but even substances will be restored. This gives an idea of the absolute universality of the eventual apokatastasis in Clement's view. Also, in *Strom.* 3,10,70,1 Clement sees universal concord, which will obtain in the end, as exemplified by the "three" in the middle of whom the Lord is in "the only Church, the only human being, the only (human) nature." The eschatological identification between Church and humanity will be maintained by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>357</sup>

<sup>355</sup> See my "Origene ed il lessico dell'eternità," *Adamantius* 14 (2008) 100–129; "Αἰώνιος and αἰών in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa," in *Studia Patristica XLVI*, eds. J. Baun–A. Cameron–M. Edwards–M. Vinzent (Leuven, 2010), 57–62.

<sup>356</sup> Cf. P. Siniscalco, "Αποκαθίστημι e ἀποκατάστασις nella tradizione patristica fino a Ireneo," in *Studia Patristica* 3 (1961) 380–396; Andrew Itter, "The Restoration of the Elect," in *Studia Patristica* 41 (2006) 169–174, then developed in Idem, *Esoteric Teaching in the Stromateis of Clement of Alexandria* (Leiden, 2009), 175–216: he underlines how "gnostic" perfection for Clement plays a unique role in universal restoration, but he deems Clement more interested in the perfection of the "gnostic" than in the apokatastasis of all.

<sup>357</sup> See my "Clement's Notion of the Logos."

Clement regarded apokatastasis as an eschatological reality, pertaining to the ultimate *telos* of all, and not only as realised in the present by some elect souls. Crucial in this connection is *Strom.* 2,22,134,4, where life αἰώνιος, thus pertaining to the next aeon, is called the *telos*, in a quotation of Rom 6:22 (the *telos* or end of sanctification is eternal life). Clement goes on to declare that this *telos* is the adoption into children of God and the assimilation to God (both a Platonic and a Christian ideal), and, what is more, expressly states that Paul teaches that this end is the hoped-for apokatastasis:

τέλος διδάσκει τὴν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀποκατάστασιν.

Paul teaches that the *end* is the *restoration* we hope for (or: we expect).

Clement thus identifies life in the world to come with the apokatastasis or final restoration itself, which is for Clement, just as then for Origen, the *telos* of all. The eventual apokatastasis is described as an object of hope, and it is significant that, citing Rom 5:4–5, Clement immediately adds that this hope “does not disappoint.” Clement thus expresses, not only the hope, but the conviction, that in the end the restoration will take place. Clement is likely to have also had in mind 1 Cor 15:24–28, in which the *telos* is the submission of all enemies to Christ, the elimination of evil and death, and the final presence of God “all in all,” which is in fact a description of the eventual apokatastasis. This passage, indeed, will be Origen’s favourite in support of apokatastasis.

Therefore, not only did Clement support the apokatastasis theory himself, but he also ascribed it to Paul, thus attaching apostolic and scriptural authority to it. This is perfectly confirmed by another passage, *Strom.* 2,22,136,6, in which he ascribes again to Paul the identification of the *telos* with apokatastasis as the object of human hope or expectation: “As the goal of faith he [sc. Paul] posits the assimilation to God—insofar as it is possible to become righteous and saint in wisdom<sup>358</sup>—, and as the ultimate *telos* the *restoration* [ἀποκατάστασις] that has been promised, based on faith.” The reference to the promise suggests a link with Acts 3:20–21 as well, in which the eventual universal restoration (ἀποκατάστασις πάντων) is said to have been announced, and thus promised, by God through his prophets from time immemorial.

<sup>358</sup> This is a reminiscence of Plato, *Theaet.* 176B. See H.F. Hägg, “Deification in Clement of Alexandria with a Special Reference to his Use of *Theaetetus* 176B,” in *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010) 169–175.

In a number of further passages as well, Clement uses again the term ἀποκατάστασις and, what is more, connects it again with the *telos*, the state of perfection that will obtain in the end. In *Strom.* 7,10,57,1–4 he depicts the perfection of the “gnostic” soul, which dwells in what is divine and saint, as an “apokatastasis or restitution to the highest place of rest” (εἰς τὸν κορυφαῖον ἀποκαταστήσῃ τῆς ἀναπαύσεως τόπον). There, it will see God “face to face.” Apokatastasis is related to the αἰδιότης, the absolute eternity of final perfection.

The scriptural adjective αἰώνιος, too, is very frequent in Clement, especially when he cites or echoes Scripture, but it almost never means “eternal”: only when it refers to God or what pertains to God according to the Biblical usage does it mean “eternal”;<sup>359</sup> otherwise it means “remote,” “ancient,” or, most frequently, “pertaining to the world to come.” The Biblical expression ζωὴ αἰώνιος, “life in the world to come,” is often found in his works, and in *Protr.* 9,83 appears as a synonym of “salvation bestowed by God.”<sup>360</sup> That “αἰώνιος life” is life in the αἰών to come is clear, for instance, from *Div.* 4,10: “whoever will leave his parents, brothers, and riches for me and for the happy news, will receive in return a hundred times as much: now in this present world [...] and in that which is coming αἰώνιος life.”<sup>361</sup> In *Strom.* 5,10,63, life in the world to come, or real life, is contrasted with real death, which consists in not recognising the Father. In addition to “αἰώνιος life,” other broadly equivalent expressions are used by Clement that contain αἰώνιος, such as “αἰώνιος tent” or “abode” (*Div.* 31,6). Vis-à-vis his abundant use of αἰώνιος in reference to life, there are only two occurrences of the biblical πῦρ αἰώνιον, the fire in the world to come. And, as I have mentioned, there is no occurrence of “αἰδίων fire,” or “αἰδίου death,” or “αἰδίου punishment.” The same will be the case with Origen.

<sup>359</sup> Clement, like the Bible, refers αἰώνιος to God, Christ (*Strom.* 7,3,16: “the αἰώνιος Logos”), and what pertains to God (e.g., *Div.* 42,20: God’s majesty is αἰώνιος); the meaning is “eternal” in these cases because of the reference to God, who is eternal, and not for the intrinsic sense of the adjective. So, for instance, the truth, qua work of the Logos-Son, is said to be αἰώνιος in *Paed.* 1,7,60. In *Strom.* 6,15,12 the works and words of God are αἰώνια, and so on.

<sup>360</sup> In *Div.* 20,2, salvation is described as amassing wealth “in the intelligible place taught to us by God,” in knowing how to use of indifferent things (in the Stoic sense), and in setting out in this manner toward the life to come (αἰώνιος).

<sup>361</sup> In *Ecl. Proph.* 11,2, Clement again contrasts those things that are present with invisible things that pertain to the world to come, and refers to the latter as “αἰώνια goods” (12,1); likewise, in *Div.* 39,1, those who are immersed in ignorance are declared to be unable to enjoy “αἰώνια goods” (see also *Strom.* 3,6,56).

Clement may also have anticipated Origen's notion of a succession of aeons prior to the final apokatastasis. Photius, *Bibl. cod.* 109, attests that in his lost *Hypotyposeis* Clement spoke of more aeons even prior to the creation of Adam.<sup>362</sup> We cannot reach certainty in the case of Clement for lack of sources, but in Origen's view this series of aeons provides rational creatures with the time needed to develop spiritually, and if necessary repent and convert, so that all in the *telos* will be able to be restored.<sup>363</sup> One further aspect that is present in Clement in relation to the doctrine of the final restoration will be developed by Origen: the notion that the eventual apokatastasis will not simply be a return to the primordial state enjoyed by the human being before the fall, but it will be the achievement of a much better condition, not as a datum, but by choice. Clement observes that Adam was initially a small child of God, innocent, but then he was seduced by desire and pleasure, and fell (*Protr.* 11,111,1), but thanks to Christ's coming, by choosing obedience, the human being will be able to gain heaven, which is explicitly described as "a greater prize" than the original Paradise (*ibid.* 11,111,2–3). Origen likewise will deem the end, which coincides with universal apokatastasis, better than the beginning, essentially for the same reason. To this end, indeed, both Clement (*Protr.* 12,120,3–4; *Strom.* 2,22,131,6; cf. *Paed.* 3,12,101,1) and Origen avail themselves of the distinction between image and likeness: the human being was created in the image of God; this is something given initially, but the likeness to God must be achieved by each one by means of engagement and voluntary adhesion to God, thanks also to the help of Christ and God's Providence. This must be freely chosen and conquered individually; this is why the *telos* will be even better than the *arkhē*.

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<sup>362</sup> More precisely, in one of his many misunderstandings of Clement's thought (on which see P. Aswhin Siejkowsky, *Clement of Alexandria on Trial* [Leiden, 2010], with my review in *GNOMON* 84 [2012] 393–397), Photius states that Clement "held the monstrous theory of metempsychosis and of the existence of many worlds [κόσμοι] prior to Adam." Either Photius misunderstood Clement's notion of two κόσμοι, the sense-perceptible and the intelligible one, as Ashwin, *Clement*, 40 suggests, or, as it seems to me more probable, given that these worlds are conceived as a succession and not as coexisting, Photius misreported κόσμοι for αἰῶνες, which better fits in with a succession of aeons and corresponds to the biblical use. Others among Photius's misunderstandings seem to me to be due to his taking as Clement's own thought the ideas of his "Gnostic" opponents, which he reported in the *Hypotyposeis* in a debate (εἴτε αὐτὸς εἴτε τις ἕτερος τὸ αὐτοῦ πρόσωπον ὑποκρίθεις, *Bibl. Cod.* 109, 89a). This is also why in the *Stromateis* he seems to refute many opinions expressed in the *Hypotyposeis* (as Photius remarks in *Bibl. Cod.* 111, 89b: πρὸς πολλὰ τῶν ἐκεῖ διαμάχεται): because many of the latter were *not* his own, but those of his opponents.

<sup>363</sup> On this notion in Origen see, e.g., my "Αἰώνιος and αἰών" and "The Universal and Eternal Validity."

*Apokatastasis as the Eventual Universal Salvation:  
Origen vs. Stoic and "Valentinian" Determinism and  
"Pagan" and "Gnostic" Platonism*

*Manere quidem naturae rationabili semper liberum arbitrium non negamus, sed tantam esse vim crucis Christi et mortis huius [...] asserimus, quae ad sanitatem et remedium non solum praesentis et futuri, sed etiam praeteritorum saeculorum, et non solum humano huic nostro ordini, sed etiam caelestibus virtutibus ordinibusque sufficiat.*

I do not deny in the least that the rational nature will always keep its free will, but I declare that the power and effectiveness of Christ's cross and of his death are so great as to be enough to set right and save, not only the present and the future aeon, but also all the past ones, and not only this order of us humans, but also the heavenly orders and powers.

(Origen, *Comm. in Rom.* 4,10)

"D'un abord moins facile que les autres grands Pères de l'église, Origène impose le respect par un caractère digne et profond, sans petitesse et sans zèle cruel, par une vie remplie de voyages et de rapports significatifs, scellée par un témoignage de sang aux deux bouts, et surtout par son itinéraire intellectuel qui traverse, maîtrise et élargit tout le champ de la connaissance chrétienne de son temps."<sup>364</sup> Just as Clement, Origen too identified the *telos* with apokatastasis and θέωσις, and both of them relied on Paul. For Clement I have just shown how this was the case; Origen, "der gelehrteste griechische Theologe in der Antike überhaupt,"<sup>365</sup> and the inventor of the Biblical

<sup>364</sup> J. O'Leary, *Christianisme et philosophie chez Origène* (Paris, 2011), 241. A review by I. Ramelli is found in GNOMON 84 (2012) 560–563.

<sup>365</sup> So rightly A.M. Ritter, "Christentum und Philosophie als Thema der frühkaiserzeitlichen Kirchenväterliteratur," in *Religiöse Philosophie und philosophische Religion der frühen Kaiserzeit*, Hg. R. Hirsch-Luipold et al. (Tübingen, 2009), 199–233, *praes.* 216. On Origen's eschatology see partial contributions: J. Daniélou, *Origène* (Paris, 1948), Ch. 5; Sachs, "Apokatastasis," § 2; G. Müller, "Origenes und die Apokatastasis," *Baseler Theologische Zeitschrift* 14 (1958) 304–313; G. Millier, "Ungeheuerliche Ontologie," *Evangelische Theologie* 34 (1974) 256–275; J. Rius-Camps, "La hipótesis origeniana sobre el fin último," in *Arché e Telos*, ed. U. Bianchi (Milan, 1981), 58–121; C. Rabinowitz, "Personal and Cosmic Salvation in Origen," *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984) 319–329; Laak, *Allversöhnung*, 31–91; H. Crouzel, *Le fin dernier selon Origène* (Aldershot, 1990); Id., "L'apocatastase chez Origène," in *Origeniana IV*, Hg. L. Lies (Innsbruck, 1987), 282–290; F.W. Norris, "Universal Salvation in Origen and Maximus," in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, ed. N.M.S. Camero (Carlisle, 1992), 35–72; P. Tzama-

commentary,<sup>366</sup> likewise speaks as follows: *finis etiam apostolus meminit dicens: Deinde finis, cum tradiderit regnum Deo et Patri. Ad quem finem utique festinandum est, ut sit operae pretium hoc ipsum quod a Deo creati sumus. Omnis vita nostra [...] consummatur et ad summum pervenit in caelestibus apud Deum* (*Hom. 1 in Ps. 38, 8*). Similarly, Origen identifies the *telos* with the ultimate perfection in *Comm. in Cant. 3,13,20: finem vero ea quae futura sunt, id est perfectionem consummationemque universitatis*. The very inscription of several Psalms, εἰς τὸ τέλος,<sup>367</sup> points to the final end, which will also coincide with the victory of God, the Good, over evil; this is why the alternative translation of the inscription, in reference to the victory, is also accepted: *quicumque sunt superscripti secundum Septuaginta "in finem," apud alios interpretes "victoriales" vel "ad victoriam" vel "victori" attitulantur* (*Hom. 1 in Ps. 38, 2*). The *telos* will indeed be the final victory over evil, which will result in the eventual presence of the sole Good, who is God, "all in all," the meaning of which according to Origen I shall analyse soon. Origen indeed designated apokatastasis—both anticipated and realised—as θέωσις,<sup>368</sup>

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likos, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology* (Leiden, 2007); T. Greggs, *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation. Restoring Particularity* (Oxford, 2009); Id., "Apokatastasis. Particularist Universalism in Origen," in *All Shall Be Well. Explorations in Universal Salvation in Christian Theology from Origen to Moltmann*, ed. G. MacDonald (Cambridge, 2011), 29–46; Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, Integrative Essay 2; "La coerenza"; "Christian Soteriology"; "Origen's interpretation of Hebrews 10:13," *Augustinianum* 47 (2007) 85–93; "1 Cor 15:24–26"; "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah"; "The Debate on Apokatastasis in Pagan and Christian Platonists," *Illinois Classical Studies* 33–34 (2008–2009) 201–234; "The Universal and Eternal Validity"; "Origen, Bardaisan"; "Tears of Pathos, Repentance, and Bliss: Crying and Salvation in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa," in *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World*, 367–396; "In Illud: Tunc et Ipse ..."; "Origen and Apokatastasis: A Reassessment"; "Forgiveness in Patristic Philosophy," in *Ancient Forgiveness. Classical, Judaic, and Christian Concepts*, ed. Ch. Griswold–D. Konstan (Cambridge, 2012), 195–215.

<sup>366</sup> As is argued by A. Fürst, "Exegesis and Philosophy in Early Christian Alexandria," in *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: the Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad*, eds. J. Lössl–J.W. Watt (Farnham, 2011), 13–32, *praes.* 14. Origen joined philosophical and philological approaches and thereby construed the notion of Christian *scientia*. Early Latin Biblical commentators, instead, based themselves on rhetorical analysis. Origen was acquainted with philosophical and literary commentaries.

<sup>367</sup> On the divergent Patristic interpretations of this title see P. Blowers, "Making Ends Meet," *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010) 163–176.

<sup>368</sup> On θέωσις see my "Deification" in *EBR. Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (Berlin, 2010–) and at least G.I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man* (New York, 1984); P. Nellas, *Deification in Christ* (Crestwood, 1987); M.D. Nispel, "Christian Deification and the Early Testimonia," *Vigiliae Christianae* 53 (1999) 289–304; J. Gross, *The Divinization of the Christians According to the Greek Fathers* (Engl. tr. Anaheim, 2001); N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*

for example in *De or.* 27,13 (θεοποιηθῶμεν)<sup>369</sup> and *Comm. in Matt.* 17,32 (θεοποιηθῆναι); as “communion with the divine” in *CC* 3,80, and as “becoming God” in *Sel. in Ps.* 23. In *Ex. ad Mart.* 25 Origen makes it clear that it is Christ-Logos who makes the eventual “deification” possible:<sup>370</sup> those who are “deified” are said to be “deified” by the Logos (as in *De or.* 27,13). Deification itself, according to Origen, is grounded in Scripture, first of all in Ps 82:6: “I have said, *You are gods*, you are all children of the Most High—and yet, you will die like humans and fall like any prince,” the passage that Jesus quotes in John 10:34: “Is it not written in your Law: ‘I have said, *You are gods*?’”; Gal 2:20: “It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me”; 1 John 3:2–3: “My beloved, we are now God’s children; what we shall be is not yet apparent, but we know that, when it is in fact apparent, we shall be *like God*, since we shall see God as God is”; 2 Pet 1:3–4: “His divine power has granted to all of us goods that belong to the divinity, thanks to the knowledge of the One who called us to his own glory and excellence [...] to become *partakers of the divine nature*”; 2 Cor 3:18: “All of us, contemplating the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are *changed into the Lord’s likeness*, from glory to glory”; cf. 2 Cor 4:3–6; Lev 19:2: “thus, be holy, just as I am holy.” In the end, according to Origen, “all will become the Son, when they become one [ἐν], just as the Son and the Father are one” (*Comm. in Jo.* 1,16). The notion of deification is elaborated in *Hom. in Lev.* 9,11,1: “Those who will follow Christ and enter with him the inner parts of the Temple and ascend to the heights of heaven will no longer be humans, but, according to Christ’s teaching, will be like angels of God. It is even possible that there is realised what the Lord said: ‘I have said, *You are gods*, you are all children of the Most High’” At that stage, indeed, one “must have *become* an angel and *even God*” (ἄγγελον ᾗδὲ καὶ Θεὸν γενέσθαι δεῖ, *Sel. in Ps.* 23).

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in the *Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford, 2005), who describes Clement as the first Christian who applied the technical terminology of θέωσις to Christian life; S. Thomas, *Deification in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition. A Biblical Perspective* (Piscataway, 2007); V. Khramov, ed., *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology* (Eugene, OR, 2011).

<sup>369</sup> In this passage, this is the result of the manducation of the “supersubstantial bread,” the spiritual (not liturgically Eucharistic) nourishment of the divine Logos for the soul, which assimilates humans to God. See L. Perrone, *La preghiera secondo Origene* (Brescia, 2011), 224. The culmination of this assimilation will be in the *telos*.

<sup>370</sup> For the “deification” as depending on Christ-Logos who performs both an illumination of minds and the unification of multiplicity see my “Cristo-Logos in Origene: ascendenze filoniane, passaggi in Bardesane e Clemente, e negazione del subordinazionismo,” in *Proceedings of the International Conference Dal Logos dei Greci e dei Romani al Logos di Dio. Ricordando Marta Sordi*, Milan, Catholic University, 11–13.XI.2009, eds. A. Valvo–R. Radice (Milan, 2011), 295–317.



The notion of apokatastasis as deification—which will be developed most of all by Eriugena, as I shall point out in due course—is perfectly consistent with Origen's idea that precisely participation in the three Persons of the Trinity will bring every rational creature to its restoration. For rational beings receive their existence from the Father (who is the Being par excellence and the Good, so that progress toward the Good is also a greater and greater acquisition of being and existence),<sup>371</sup> their rationality from the Son-Logos, and holiness from the Holy Spirit (*Princ.* 1,3,8).<sup>372</sup> The doctrine of apokatastasis and “deification” is in equally perfect harmony with the conviction, expressed e.g. in *Princ.* 4,4,8, that the aim of God's creation is the good of all rational creatures and their knowledge of God: “The Godhead, who is good by nature, wanting that there might exist beings to benefit, and such as to be able to rejoice in the goods bestowed upon them, created creatures worthy of Itself, that is, capable of understanding It in a worthy way. In reference to these God declares, ‘I have generated children’” (Isa 1:2). The same goal of creation, namely the knowledge of God, is declared in *Comm. in Io.* 1,16,92: in the *telos* “those who have arrived at God through the Logos who is near God will have one and the same activity: knowing God, that all of them may become one son, being transformed by the knowledge of the Father in the way in which now the Son alone knows the Father.” This is also a description of the eventual *θέωσις*. Only God is substantial Good; creatures participate in it to a lesser or greater degree, and this is why they can fall away from it;<sup>373</sup> only their adhesion to the Good—which goes hand in hand

<sup>371</sup> This is why, conversely, the closer one is to evil, the less one is (e.g. *Hom. in Ps.* 36, 5,5; *Princ.* 1,3,6; *Comm. in Io.* 2,13,7; *Fr. in Rom.* 25; *Fr. in Eph.* 2). This of evil as non-being is one of the main metaphysical traits of Origen's thought, which also entails that evil cannot subsist forever and thus supports the doctrine of apokatastasis. See my “Christian Soteriology.”

<sup>372</sup> On the role of the Spirit in the restoration of humans to God in Origen see M. Beyer Moser, *Teacher of Holiness* (Piscataway, NJ, 2005). On the role that Christ-Logos, too, plays in sanctification: *Princ.* 3,6,9; *Comm. in Io.* 1,27(25); 1,34(39); 19,6(1); *Hom. in Ier.* 1,8.

<sup>373</sup> *Princ.* 4,6,2: “I refer to all those who, bending their knee in the name of Jesus, have given a sign of their subjection: heavenly, terrestrial, and infernal creatures [Phil 2:10]. These three names indicate the totality of all created beings, namely those which, having had one and the same origin, being variously pushed each one by its own impulses, have been distributed into different orders according to their merits, because in all of these *the Good was not present in a substantial manner, as instead it is in God, in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit*. For only in the Trinity, Creatrix of all, does the Good exist in a substantial manner. The other beings possess it in an accidental way, so that it may fail [...] If they neglect their own participation, out of laziness, some sooner and others later, some more and others less, they become the cause of their own fall [...] Huge is the variety of falls by which one decays from its condition, depending on the movements of its intellect and will. As one descends less and another more, the just judgment of God's providence provides that each one receives what it deserves for its sins in

with their full knowledge of the Good—will bring about their deification. The only *logikon* that never fell from God in the least is that of Jesus Christ; in *Comm. in Cant.* 3,14,30 Origen contrasts the presence of sin in each and every rational creature with Jesus's freedom from sin (*solus ergo est Dominus et Salvator noster Iesus qui peccatum non fecit*). This is why his assumption of humanity, with its mortal body, was voluntary and not the necessary consequence of sin: *in morte fuerit, sed voluntarie et non, ut nos, necessitate peccati* (ibid. 3,14,32). On account of this, Christ could defeat death and free those who were under the power of death, physical and spiritual: *Quia liber inter mortuos fuit, idcirco devicto eo qui habebat mortis imperium, abstraxit captivitatem quae tenebatur in morte* (ibid.).

In this connection, one of the main pillars with which Origen buttressed his doctrine of apokatastasis and the relevant final *θέωσις* is that of the ontological non-subsistence of evil. Evil is non-being; only God / the Good is the true Being. For Origen, the Good has a priority that is not only moral, but ontological, because it is God, and qua God it is the true Being. Evil has no ontological stance. This will be the case in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius as well (who will pithily express this in two of the most important of his *Kephalaia Gnostica*, which rely on Origen verbally).<sup>374</sup> In *Comm. in Io.* 2,13<sup>375</sup> Origen is clear that

It is the good God who says so [sc. "I am the One who Is"], and it is the same God whom the Saviour glorifies when he says: "No one is good but God the Father." The one who is *good*, therefore, coincides with the One who *is*. On the contrary, evil and meanness are opposed to the Good and non-being to Being. As a consequence, meanness and *evil are non-being* [οὐκ ὄν].

This has momentous consequences on the soteriological and eschatological planes, as well as on the ethical one. For choosing evil means becoming "non-being," but for Origen this cannot mean a substantial annihilation of God's creatures:

Si autem a Te [sc. Deo] exiero, perdidi etiam hoc ipsum quod sum, et *ero tamquam qui non est* [...] in nobis est, sive ut simus sive ut non simus. Donec

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relation to the variety of movements." In *Princ.* 1,7,2 Origen insists that no rational creature is unable to receive both Good and evil in itself; the same is hammered home in 1,8,3: "In my opinion, among all rational creatures there is none who is incapable of the Good [...] there is no rational nature who is unable to receive both Good and evil in itself, apart from that of God, the source of all goods."

<sup>374</sup> See below, Ch. 3, sections on Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius.

<sup>375</sup> H.G. Thümmel, *Origenes' Johanneskommentar Buch I–V* (Tübingen, 2011), with ed., transl., and commentary of this work.

enim adhaeremus Deo et inhaeremus ei qui vere est, etiam nos sumus. Sin autem abscesserimus a Deo [...] vitio in contrarium decidimus. *Non ergo per hoc substantialis animae designatur interitus.*<sup>376</sup> (Hom. 2 in Ps. 38, 12)

Origen added the last sentence because thinkers such as Philo thought that a soul that does evil perishes ontologically.<sup>377</sup> That the annihilation of the wicked for Origen is not ontological, but spiritual, is confirmed by Hom. 2 in Ps. 38, 1: *peccatores ad nihilum redigit: haec est ergo imago terreni id est peccatorum, quam ad nihilum redigit Deus in civitate sua.* Sinners will actually perish in the other world, but not ontologically:

“Cum pereunt peccatores videbis.” Fortassis hoc prius erit ut peccatores et impios iusti videant condemnatos. [...] Postea enim quam viderint quomodo pereunt peccatores, tunc ipsi exaltabuntur [...] “Et ecce *non erat* [sc. impius].” In die iudicii omnino *non esse*. Qui enim non est particeps Illius qui semper est, iste *neque esse* dicitur. (Hom. 5 in Ps. 36, 5)

The destruction of the sinner in the next world will be the destruction of his sin, of evil, so that the sinner will be no longer a sinner, but a righteous: *Hoc enim etiam Dominus pollicetur, ut exterminet romphaeam, id est peccatum, ita ut ultra iam non sit peccator.* For evil, when is chosen no longer by anyone, will vanish according to its ontological non-subsistence: *Non enim decidentia de homine vitia ad aliam aliquam substantiam congregantur, sed sibi abeunt, et in semet ipsa resoluta evanescent atque in nihilum rediguntur* (Comm. in Cant. 4,1,13). Indeed evil, according to Origen (CC 4,63), just as to Plato (Resp. 445C6), is indefinite, ἀόριστον, like non-being; it is dispersed in multiplicity, whereas virtue, like the Good—who is God, the One—, is one and simple.<sup>378</sup> What will be burnt away by the πῦρ αἰώνιον will be not sinners, but their φαῦλα δόγματα, their μοχθηροὶ λόγοι (Comm. in Matth. 5,10,2).

<sup>376</sup> See also Princ. 2,9,2: “To go far from the Good means nothing but falling into evil, since evil is a loss of Good. This is why it happens that, the more one detaches himself from the Good, the closer one comes to evil.”

<sup>377</sup> See Ramelli, “Philosophical Allegoresis.” On the death of the soul in Philo and early Imperial philosophy see Ead., “1 Tim 5:6 and the Notion and Terminology of Spiritual Death: Hellenistic Moral Philosophy in the Pastoral Epistles,” *Aevum* 84 (2010) 3–16, and J.T. Conroy, “Philo’s Death of the Soul: Is This Only a Metaphor?” *Studia Philonica Annual* 24 (2011) 23–40, who is right to see Philo’s notion of the death of the soul as ontological and not just metaphorical, although he does not indicate the close parallels in Roman Stoicism and the NT (Paul and Pastoral Epistles), besides Origen. On the death of the soul in 1 Cor 11:30 see I. Ramelli, “Spiritual Weakness, Illness, and Death in 1 Cor 11:30,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130 (2011) 145–163.

<sup>378</sup> See my “Harmony between *arkhē* and *telos* in Patristic Platonism and the Imagery of Astronomical Harmony Applied the Apokatastasis Theory,” *International Journal for the Platonic Tradition* 7.1 (2013) 1–49.

That of the ontological non-subsistence of evil and, as a consequence, its eventual disappearance<sup>379</sup> was a doctrine that, on the one side, was shared by Platonism, but on the other side was also founded on Scripture, especially 1 Cor 15:24–26 and Revelation. Origen, as Gregory Nyssen after him,<sup>380</sup> maintained that evil will finally be eliminated on the basis of 1 Cor 15:28, in which the *telos* is described as the situation that will obtain when God will be “all in all.” Origen’s argument is theological and ontological: if God is really to be in all, this implies that evil, which is the opposite of God (qua non-Good and non-Being), will be no longer in any being:

When God will be “all in all,” we *cannot admit of evil, lest God be found in evil* [...] That God is said to be “all in all” means that God will be all even in the single creatures [...] in the following sense: whatever the rational intelligence, free from every dirtiness of sin and purified from every obfuscation of evilness, will be able to perceive, grasp, and think, all of this will be God [...], therefore, God will be “all” for this intelligence [...] because *evil will exist no more*: for this intelligence, everything is God, who is untouched by evil [...] Therefore, if at the end of the world, which will be similar to the beginning, there will be restored [ἀποκαθίστημι] that condition which the rational nature had when it had not yet felt the need to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, once every sense of evil is removed, then for the creature, who has returned pure and unsullied, the One who is the only good God will become all. And not only in few or in many, but “*in all*” *God will be all*, when there exists no more death, nor death’s sting [1 Cor 15:55–56], *nor evil any more*, absolutely: then God will truly be “all in all.”<sup>381</sup> (Princ. 3,6,2–3)

Like Gregory of Nyssa after him, Origen thought that the final vanishing of evil will depend, to be sure, on its ontological non-subsistence due to its opposition to God, the Good and the true Being, but at the same time also on the “inhumanation,” death, and resurrection of the Son of God, to which I shall return soon:

A human being died, and his death not only constituted a model of death by devotion, but also produced the *principle and advancement of the destruction of what is evil* and the devil, which ruled upon the whole earth. (CC 7,17)

<sup>379</sup> E.g. Princ. 2,9,2; 1,7,5; Comm. in Io. 2,13; CC 4,63; 7,72; Sel. in Ps. 56; Exh. ad mart. 13; Ramelli, “Christian Soteriology.”

<sup>380</sup> In *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* 17 Downing and *De anima et resurrectione* 104–105. See I. Ramelli, “The Trinitarian Theology of Gregory of Nyssa in his *In Illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*: His Polemic against “Arian” Subordinationism and the Apokatastasis,” in *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism. Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Tübingen, 17–20.IX.2008)*, eds. V.H. Drecoll–M. Berghaus, Vigiliae Christianae Suppl. 106 (Leiden, 2011), 445–478.

<sup>381</sup> See also CC 6,36.

Another biblical foundation to Origen's doctrine of the ontological non-subsistence of evil comes from the creation account: evil, like death, is no creature of God. This is why it is not good: because it did not receive its being from God.<sup>382</sup> Before emerging as a result of sin, evil did not exist at the beginning, as it was not created by God, and it will not exist in the end. Evil "did not exist in the beginning and will not exist forever" (*Comm. in Io.* 2,13); "there was a state in which evil did not exist, and there will be one in which evil will not exist any more" (*Expl. in Prov.* 5; *Frg. in Prov.* 5). It was Origen who directly inspired Evagrius's crystalline formula: "There was a time when evil did not exist, and there will come a time when it will no more exist" (*KG* 1,40).

Evil, thanks to Christ and due to its ontological non-subsistence, will finally disappear from everyone. The immediate consequence of this, which from the scriptural side is foretold in 1 Cor 15:28 and Acts 3:20–21, is that all beings will be restored into the Good, who is God. *Sel. in Ps.* 56 is fully Origenian:

A righteous person keeps her hope in the shadow of the wings of God, until *evil will be entirely destroyed*. After the abolition of evil and its *annihilation into non-being*, this person will no longer place her hope in a shadow, but in the Godhead itself.

Evil will be reduced up to its annihilation (*Hom. in Iud.* 1,3).<sup>383</sup> When every evil is definitely reduced to non-being, all beings will return to the Good-God, even Satan, who will thus be saved not qua devil, arch-enemy, and death, but qua creature of God, after his conversion from evil to the Good (*Princ.* 1,6,3). Satan and all his demons, indeed, are not evil by nature, as Origen maintains in his anti-"Gnostic" polemic; on the contrary, they are good, qua creatures of God, but they fell from the Good due to a wrong choice of their free will and even became an obstacle for "those who are instructed and educated" (*ibid.*). Indeed, only God is substantial and immutable Good; all rational creatures, by virtue of their free will, can even become "opposite powers"<sup>384</sup>—but they can convert back to the Good. In *Princ.* 1,6,3, Origen, in a problematic form that is consistent with his typical "zetetic" method

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<sup>382</sup> See Ramelli, "1 Cor 15:28."

<sup>383</sup> *Cum semel electis dies mali coeperint breviari, semper breviantur et minuuntur, usquequo ad nihilum redigantur et penitus exolescant atque ad ultimum pereant.*

<sup>384</sup> "This is why we maintain that some, beginning with small sins, can arrive to such a degree of evilness and make such a progress in evil as to become hostile powers." So Jerome *Ep.* 124,2. Rufinus nuances: "similar to hostile powers in this respect."

—all the more in matters of eschatology, which he included among those still most open to rational investigation<sup>385</sup>—, puts forward the possibility of the restoration of the devil and all demons:

Whether some, in these orders that act under the devil's command and obey his evilness, can one day, in the future aeons, *convert back to the Good*, because *free will* is perpetually present in them, or their evilness, being persistent and inveterate, due to habit becomes like a kind of nature, please you too, who are reading, examine this.

Origen's own solution is clear if one considers his ontology. The choice of the Good can become nature; it has indeed done so in the case of the *logikon* of Jesus Christ, whose fervent and steadfast adhesion to the Good, i.e. God, has become nature and has thereby transformed it into God, the Good.<sup>386</sup> But the choice of evil *cannot* become nature,<sup>387</sup> precisely because evil's very nature is non-being, as opposed to God who is the Being and the Good. Therefore, if the devil's choice for evil should really become nature,<sup>388</sup> the devil would have to disappear, because it would be transformed ipso facto into non-being in an ontological sense. Now, this is *Philo's* solution for evil souls, which will thus vanish, but not Origen's.<sup>389</sup> Origen was convinced that

<sup>385</sup> In *Princ.* 1 *praef.* 5–7, among the issues that are not defined by Scripture or the apostolic tradition, and are therefore open to rational research, Origen lists some eschatological points: “what there was before this aeon and what there will be after it is not clearly known; on these issues, the teaching of the church has not been clearly expressed.” As a consequence, in *Princ.* 1,6,1, Origen says, in reference to the end of the world: “We expound them with great fear and circumspection, by way of *examining and discussing* more than expressing an ascertained and well defined solution [...] With this question I deal more for discussing than for defining.” Many other examples could be adduced of passages in which Origen manifests his ‘zetetic’ attitude, e.g. *Princ.* 2,6,2, in which he states that he offers “suppositions more than precise declarations”; *ibid.* 2,3,7; *Comm. in Io.* 32,22,14; *ibid.* 13,16, in which he repeats that tradition has fixed just a small number of core Christian truths, leaving the others to rational investigation; *Comm. in Matt.* 14,22; *Hom. in Num.* 14,1, etc.

<sup>386</sup> I cannot treat this point here; I limit myself to referring to I. Ramelli, “Atticus and Origen on the Soul of God the Creator: From the Pagan to the Christian Side of Middle Platonism,” *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* 10 (2011) 13–35, and “Gesù Cristo come entità mostruosa e ibrida.”

<sup>387</sup> In *Comm. in Io.* 20,21,19 Origen even considers it strange, surprising, and absurd to think of one who by choice has become a liar and then this turns into his nature—and he is not speaking of the choice of evil itself as transformed into nature.

<sup>388</sup> This seems assumed, e.g., by Ch. Köckert, “Origenes: De Principiis,” in *Hauptwerke der Systematischen Theologie. Ein Studienbuch*, Hrsg. R.A. Klein–Chr. Polke–M. Wendte (Tübingen, 2009), 13–30, *praes.* 27, but at least as a “Möglichkeit.” In fact Origen poses the question; his ontological answer is clear.

<sup>389</sup> See argument in Ramelli, “Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture.”

no creature, created by God in order to exist, could ever be annihilated into non-being. This is, ultimately, what Origen explains in *Princ.* 3,6,5, drawing on 1 Cor 15:26: “This is why it is also written that ‘the last enemy, death, will be destroyed,’ that there may be nothing painful left, when death will exist no more, nor anything opposed, when there will be no enemy left.” But, Origen adds, the last enemy, who is called “death,” that is, the devil, “will be destroyed, *not in such a way as to exist no more*, but so that he may no longer be an enemy and death” (*destruetur non ut non sit, sed ut inimicus et mors non sit*). In this way, what will disappear will be the enemy and death; what will be saved will be God’s creature, who by then will be no longer opposed to God, nor will be “death” any more. Origen identifies the devil with “death” in that the devil, insofar as he is evil and tempts others toward evilness, is the cause for humans of “the real death” (ὁ ὄντως θάνατος, *Dial. Her.* 26), the death of the soul.<sup>390</sup> Moreover, he was also the cause of physical death, since he triggered the fall which brought about death.<sup>391</sup> Origen goes on:

we must understand the destruction of the last enemy as the destruction, *not of the substance* that was created by God, but of the *inclination and the hostile will* that stemmed, not from God, but from the enemy himself. Therefore, he will be destroyed, *not in order for him to exist no more*, but in such a way as to be no longer “enemy” and “death.”

This is one of the most explicit assertions of the eventual restoration of the devil in all of Origen’s works, and is far from being the only one.<sup>392</sup> Origen quotes, and bases himself on, Wis 1:14, excludes the ontological vanishing of the devil, and proposes the alternative of his restoration. This is how he further explains his ontological point in *Princ.* 3,6,5: God “made all beings that they might exist, and what was made in order to exist cannot fail to exist. Therefore, creatures can receive transformations and variety of aspects, so that, with respect to their *merits*, they will be found in *better or worse*

<sup>390</sup> See also *Comm. in Matth.* 12,33,12: “The enemy of this Life, which will be destroyed as the last enemy of all his [sc. of Christ, who is Life] enemies, is death (1 Cor 15:26), the death that the sinning soul dies,” θάνατός ἐστιν ὃν ψυχὴ ἢ ἀμαρτάνουσα ἀποθνήσκει. Cf. Ramelli, “Spiritual weakness, Illness, and Death.”

<sup>391</sup> Origen cites the same passage from Paul, with the identification of death, sin, and the devil, also in *Comm. in Matt.* 12,33; *Hom. in Lev.* 9,11; *Hom. in Ier.* 18,3; *Hom. in Ies. Nav.* 8,4: *iam tunc ultra omnino non erit diabolus quia iam non erit mors*.

<sup>392</sup> H. Crouzel, “Apocatastase chez Origène”; G. Bunge, “Créé pour être,” *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 98 (1997) 21–29. See also D. Satran, “The Salvation of the Devil,” in *Studia Patristica* 23 (1989) 171–177; Y.-M. Duval, “Vers le Commentaire sur Sophonie d’Origène,” in *Origeniana VIII*, 625–640.

*conditions*. However, the beings that God created in order for them to exist and endure *cannot undergo a destruction* in their very *substance*.” Only God can destroy them, but that God will never destroy the substance of those beings that he created is made clear also in *Hom. in Ier.* 1,16, in which Origen joins this point with that of the eventual eradication of evil.

A similar ontological argument is presented in *CC* 5,22, in which Origen insists that, unlike the material world, the *logoi* of God’s creatures will never pass away:

Even if heaven and earth and all that is in them will pass away, the *logoi* of every being, though, will not pass away, by all means, since they are parts of a whole or forms of the species of the Logos, who was God the Logos in the beginning. For we should pay attention to the One who says: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my *logoi* will not pass away.” (Matt 24:35)

This is why Jerome attests that, according to Origen, “the devil can return to being an archangel” (*Ep.* 124,3). For, qua creature of God, the devil *is* an archangel; he became “devil” due to a wrong choice of his free will, but precisely because his will remains free, he can convert again to the Good and thus be saved qua creature of God, qua archangel. This is indicated in *Princ.* 1,8,4, in reference to demons in general:

They do *not* possess these characteristics *in an essential/substantial way*, since they have not been created so, but they have obtained these hierarchical orders in evil because of *their own movements* (sc. acts of will)<sup>393</sup> and *progresses* in evildoing. This is the second order of rational creatures, which has given itself to evil to such an extent that it *does not want, more than it cannot*, be called back, *as long as* [*dum*] the frenzy of evil becomes pleasure and delights them.

Evil is not part and parcel of the demons’ essence; if they do not turn to the Good it is because they do not *want*, and not because they *can* no longer.

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<sup>393</sup> In Origen, as I mentioned, “movement” often denotes an act of will, a movement toward good or evil. See, e.g., *Princ.* 3,6,6–7: “God created two general natures: the visible one, i.e. the corporeal, and the invisible one, which is incorporeal. Both these natures can have *various movements*. The invisible one, which is endowed with reason, *moves in its intellectual disposition*, because it is endowed with *free will*. This is why it is found sometimes in the Good, and sometimes in evil”; 3,2,2: “when we do not resist the first movements [*primi motus*] of intemperance, a hostile power instigates and exhorts us.” For Origen the notion of movement is so closely related to that of an act of will that with *primi motus* he does not designate προπάθειαι, as Seneca did, but the first voluntary movements of the soul. This meaning of *primi motus* in Origen is argued, I think correctly, by S. Guly, “The Distinction between προπάθειαι and First Voluntary Movements in *Princ.* III,” in *Studia Patristica* 50 (2011) 177–188, *praes.* 183–184.



They do not want for all the time in which they take delight in evil, but time is not eternity. When they stop taking delight in evil they will return to the Good, their Creator.

In *Princ.* 3,6,3 Origen argues for the reintegration of the devil and his angels on the grounds of the final unity: not even these creatures will be in disagreement and excluded from the eventual perfect unity and harmony, an ideal that is both Platonic and based on John 17.<sup>394</sup> Thus, “Once things have begun to rush toward the ideal state in which *all are one*, just as the Father is one with the Son, as a logical consequence we must believe that, when all are one, there will be *no divergence* any more” (*Princ.* 3,6,4). “No divergence” does not mean “no distinction,” “no differentiation,” but “no opposition.” Origen is not envisaging a confusion of substances, but a unity and harmony of will, insofar as the wills of all rational creatures will be oriented to the Good.<sup>395</sup> This is why all *logika* will equally shine like a sun.<sup>396</sup> The same eventual lack of divergence and conflict is envisaged in *Comm. in Io.* 32,3: Christ “will hand the Kingdom to God the Father, after destroying every governor, authority, and power [sc. of evil]; it is against these, I think, that the battle will take place, so that there will be no longer governors, authorities, and powers with which to have a conflict, and there will be *no longer any conflict*, because every governor, authority, and power will have been destroyed.” Divine Providence extends to demons as well, who, after a long purification and illumination, will no longer be powers of evil, but will return to their angelic state and ascend the angelic hierarchies,<sup>397</sup> since indeed all *logika* can become demons as well as revert to their original condition.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> See M. Kuyama, “Evil and Diversity in Origen’s *De Principiis*,” in *Origeniana VIII*, 489–502, and my “Harmony.”

<sup>395</sup> See Ramelli, “Origen and Apokatastasis: A Reassessment.”

<sup>396</sup> Commenting on Matt 13:42–43 in *Comm. in Matt.* 13,17; 10,2–3, Origen remarks that, after evil has been eliminated from them, all creatures, including demons, will return to their original splendour; “they will no longer shine forth in different measures, as before,” but “all will *equally* shine forth as a sun.” Gregory Nyssen will be reminiscent of this in *De mortuis* and elsewhere.

<sup>397</sup> “Both in these visible and temporal aeons and in those invisible and otherworldly, God’s Providence operates in favour of all with measure and discernment, with regard to order and merit. Therefore, some first and then others, and yet others in the very last times, by means of heavier and more painful sufferings, long and undergone, say, for many aeons, in the end *all, renewed by instruction and severe corrections, will be restored* first among angels, then in superior hierarchies; thus all will be gradually received higher and higher, until they arrive at the invisible and eternal realities, after running, one by one, the offices of the heavenly hierarchies to be instructed.”

<sup>398</sup> Cf. the final sentence of *Princ.* 1,6,3: “Every rational creature can pass from one order

That this process can be extremely long in the case of the worst “enemies” of the Good and of God, including Satan-Death, is claimed in *Princ.* 3,6,6: “Every being will be restored to be *one* [John 17:21], and *God will be ‘all in all’* [1 Cor 15:28]. However, this will not happen in a moment, but slowly and gradually, through innumerable aeons of indefinite duration,<sup>399</sup> because correction and purification will take place gradually, according to the needs of each individual. Thus, whereas some with a faster rhythm will be the first to hasten to the goal, and others will follow them closely, yet others on the contrary will fall a long distance behind. And in this way, through innumerable orders constituted by those who make progress and, *after being enemies, are reconciled with God* [*Deo se ex inimicis reconcilantium*], there will come the last enemy, Death, that this may be destroyed and there may be no enemy left.” The devil will be no more enemy and death. Death will therefore disappear, as Origen repeatedly hammers home, even in his homilies, for instance *Hom. in Iud.* 6,1: in reference to the killing of Sisara, interpreted as a symbol of the devil-death, *intelligimus haec omnia sacramenta esse quae in novissimis temporibus et in fine saeculi per ecclesiam consummantur [...] illius scilicet temporis cum novissimus inimicus destruetur mors*. And this death which will be annihilated is not only physical death, but also the death of the soul due to sin (*mors animae* in *Comm. in Rom.* 5,7, on which I shall comment below). Consequently, the final disappearance of death does not only coincide with the resurrection of the bodies,<sup>400</sup> but also with the healing of all

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to another [*sc. of logika*] and reach all, one by one, because each rational creature, by virtue of its free will, makes progresses or regresses depending on its movements and impulses”; *ibid.* 1,8,4; “we see some humans progress until they are assumed into the order of angels”; *Comm. in Cant.* 4,3,21: *per arbitrii libertatem possibile est unumquemque ex parte alterius transire vel ad partem Dei si melius, vel si nequius ad daemonum portionem*. In *Princ.* 3,1,23 Origen expresses the same concept (“I deem it possible that the soul, which I have repeatedly described as immortal and eternal, through infinite spaces and innumerable and different times, either will fall from the supreme Good to the deepest evil, or will be restored from the deepest evil to the highest Good”), remarking that some “can reach such a degree of evilness as to become hostile powers.” But even these, by education and purification, can be restored to the Good.

<sup>399</sup> Exactly in the light of these aeons Origen expounds the spiritual meaning of the Sabbath, the sabbatical year, and the Pentecost of years of the Hebrew calendar in the exegesis of the parable of the workers in *Comm. in Matth.* 15,31 and *De or.* 27,13–15.

<sup>400</sup> Origen never denied it, but was accused of doing so because he thought of a transformation of the earthly body into a spiritual one. See fuller treatment in my “Pre-Existence of Souls?” Especially Epiphanius *AH* 64,4,10 charged Origen with the denial of the resurrection of the flesh, to which Rufinus responded in *De adult. libr. Or.* 1: *de resurrectione carnis, qui tam euidenter pronuntiauit naturam carnis in caelum ascendisse cum Verbo Dei [...], possibile erat ut hanc iterum diceret non esse saluandam?* See also M.J. Edwards, “Origen’s Two

from sin.<sup>401</sup> “No one will do evil any more, and evil will govern on no one” (*Hom. in Jes. Nav.* 8,5).<sup>402</sup> This is why, e.g., in his lost *De Resurrectione* Origen interpreted Ez 37 as a resurrection that is not only a physical resurrection, but also a spiritual restoration from sin to God, in turn allegorically expressed as a return of the Israelites from their exile (*ap. Method. De res. ap. Phot. Bibl. cod.* 234, p. 300a).<sup>403</sup> The same notion is conveyed in

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Resurrections,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 46 (1995), 502–518, *praes.* 504; L.R. Hennessey, “Origen of Alexandria: The Fate of the Soul and the Body after Death,” *Second Century* 8 (1991), 163–178; Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History*, 56–64. Here I just recall that Origen conceived of no creature as absolutely incorporeal ever; only the Trinity is; a soul is always with a body, even after death (καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀπαλλαγῇ σώματι χρήται ἡ ψυχὴ: *Res. ap. Method. Res. ap. Phot. Bibl. cod.* 234, p. 301a). On the meanings of ἀσώματον in Origen see L.R. Hennessey, “A Philosophical Issue in Origen’s Eschatology: The Three Senses of Incorporeality,” in *Origeniana V*, ed. R.J. Daly (Leuven, 1992), 373–380: the absolute meaning refers to the Trinity alone; the two others are relative and refer to the state of the soul after the death of the heavy body and after the resurrection, when the body will be spiritual. See my “Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah”; Prinivalli, *Magister*, 69; 89 ff.; J. Rius Camps, “La suerte final de la naturaleza corpórea según el Περὶ ἀρχῶν de Orígenes,” in *Studia Patristica XIV* (Berlin, 1976), 167–179. In *Res.* 1,20–24 Methodius reports a long passage in which Origen argued that the material substratum or ὑποκείμενον, which is always in flux, will not be resurrected, but the εἶδος will, which is the metaphysical form of the body and will guarantee the permanence of its identity (for Methodius’s own misunderstanding of this term see below, the section on him). At the same time Origen also insists on the double meaning of resurrection: of the body but also of the soul, which is liberated from its death due to sin. See my “Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah”; H. Crouzel, “L’apocatastase chez Origène,” *praes.* 285–287; B. Daley, “The Ripening of Salvation,” *Communio* 17 (1990) 27–49, *praes.* 37–38.

<sup>401</sup> E.g. CC 6,36: “We can say that the death of the world comes to an end when *the sin of the world dies*, explaining the Apostle’s words: ‘And after he has put all enemies under his feet, then the last enemy, death, will be destroyed.’” The same passage, 1 Cor 15:24–28, is explained in reference to the eventual submission of the devil to Christ also in *Comm. in Io.* 32,3. In *Comm. in Matth.* 12,33 likewise: “It must be understood what it means ‘to taste death’. Life is the One who said of himself: ‘I am Life’, and the enemy of this life is death, which is ‘the last enemy’ among all enemies and will be destroyed.” On the equation between the devil and death (*Princ.* 3,6,5–6; *Comm. in Rom.* 5,3) see L. Hennessey, “The Place of Saints and Sinners after Death,” in C. Kannengiesser–W.L. Petersen, eds., *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy* (Notre Dame, 1988), 293–312, *praes.* 307. In a passage of not completely certain paternity, but Origenian in its contents, *Sel. in Ps.* 51, the same is announced: “God, who demolishes the buildings of evil, will also demolish the evil one. Since in buildings the worst stones are the last that are put down, and the evil one is the worst of all, he will be demolished in the end, when the last enemy, death, will be destroyed.” Indeed the devil, along with the powers of evil, was already “nailed to the cross” at Christ’s crucifixion (*Hom. in Ies. Nav.* 8,3).

<sup>402</sup> Cf. *Exp. in Prov.* 5: “There will be no one who does evil any more, as there will be no evil any more.”

<sup>403</sup> Τὸ παρὰ τοῦ προφήτου Ἰεζεκιὴλ περὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῶν νεκρῶν ῥητὸν εἰρημένον τοῦ Ὠριγένους ἀλληγορῶντος καὶ εἰς τὴν τῶν εἰς Βαβυλῶνα αἰχμαλωτισθέντων Ἰσραηλιτῶν ἐπάνοδον ἐκβιαζομένου εἰρησθαι.

*Hom. in Ez.* 4,8, where Origen delineates the succession of the present world, the final Judgement, and the spiritual resurrection of all sinners: *vidit mundum ante diluvium, hoc est ante consummationem; vidit mundum in diluvio, id est in corruptione et in interitu peccatorum, quae in die sunt eventura iudicii; rursum videbit mundum in resurrectione omnium peccatorum*. That this is their *spiritual* resurrection, i.e. their restoration, is clear because only sinners are said here to be resurrected, and because the physical resurrection is prior to the final Judgment and not posterior to it; through purification sinners, who had died a spiritual death, will return to life. Origen envisages the eventual liberation of all creation from death as a liberation from the devil: "The Godhead keeps in itself marvels that are much greater than those which are contemplated by the Sun, the Moon, and the choirs of stars, and even the holy angels, whom God created as spirits and flames of fire. And God will reveal those marvels when the whole of creation will be *liberated from the chains of the enemy* to pass on to the glorious freedom of the children of God" (*Exh. ad Mart.* 13).<sup>404</sup> In *Princ.* 1,7,5, too, Origen presents the very restoration as the final liberation of all creatures from evil and the power of the devil; demons themselves will be liberated: "Let us now see what will be *the liberation of creation and the end of enslavement*. At the end of the world, when the souls and rational creatures will be, so to say, pushed by the Lord out of the locks and gates, some will move more slowly due to their laziness, others will fly swiftly with their zeal. [...] But when Christ will have handed the Kingdom to God the Father [1 Cor 15:28], then these creatures too, which earlier had become a part of the Kingdom of Christ, along with the rest of the Kingdom will be handed to the Father, that this may rule over them. Thus, when God will be 'all in all' [*ibid.*], as these also are part of the 'all,' God will be in them as in all."

That Origen denied the restoration of the devil has been recently maintained on the basis of the importance of free will for Origen, which implies that someone could freely choose to reject the Good, i.e. God, forever.<sup>405</sup> This kind of argument, however, does not consider that (1) in the passage I have quoted from *Princ.* 1,6,3, it is *exactly on the basis of free will* that Origen

<sup>404</sup> *Princ.* 3,6,1: "And we understand the Apostle's words, 'All creation will be liberated from enslavement to corruption for the freedom of the glory of the children of God' [Rom 8:21] in the sense that the first creation of rational and incorporeal creatures was such as to be free from corruption, as it was not endowed with (heavy) bodies. For, wherever these are, instantly corruption sets in. Creation will be liberated from enslavement to corruption once it has received the glory of the Child of God and God will be all in all."

<sup>405</sup> L.R. Holliday, "Will Satan Be Saved?," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 1–23.

argues that demons and the devil will be able to convert in the end; (2) in Origen's view there is no conflict between individual free will—for all the importance that Origen attached to it<sup>406</sup>—and God's providence, goodness, and love. Still in *Comm. in Rom.* 5,10,212–222, Origen ruled out that human free will may ever prevent universal apokatastasis: *si haec omnia quae enumeravit apostolus separare nos non possunt a caritate Dei [...] multo magis libertas arbitrii nos ab eius caritate separare non poterit*. Indeed, in *Comm. in Rom.* 4,10, another passage from Origen's full maturity,<sup>407</sup> Origen—faithful to his notion of reconciliation of providence and human free will—forcefully asserts that all *logika*, including demons, will indeed keep their free will forever, but this shall not impede their ultimate salvation, because of the universal and eternal effectiveness<sup>408</sup> of Christ's death:

Manere quidem naturae rationabili semper *liberum arbitrium* non negamus, sed tantam esse *uim crucis Christi* et mortis huius, quam in saeculorum finem suscepit, asserimus, quae ad sanitatem et remedium non solum praesentis et futuri, sed etiam praeteritorum saeculorum, et non solum humano huic nostro ordini, sed etiam caelestibus uirtutibus ordinibusque sufficiat.

I do not deny in the least that the rational nature will always keep its free will, but I declare that the power and effectiveness of Christ's cross and of his death, which he took upon himself toward the end of the aeons, are so great as to be enough to set right and save, not only the present and the future aeon, but also all the past ones, and not only this order of us humans, but also the heavenly orders and powers.

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<sup>406</sup> See e.g. H. Crouzel, "Theological Construction and Research: Origen on Freewill," in B. Drewery–R. Bauckham (eds.), *Scripture, Tradition and Reason* (Edinburgh, 1988), 239–265. M. Frede, *A Free Will: Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought*, ed. A. Long (Berkeley, 2011), Ch. 4, argues that later Aristotelians and Platonists incorporated the Stoic doctrine of assent into their views (52) and addresses Christian writers (Origen and Evagrius), for whom the notion of free will became prominent in relation to the influence of demons on people's will. In Ch. 7 Frede attributes the spread of the idea of free will to Origen; it cannot be found in the LXX or the NT and came to the Christians mainly from Stoicism (103). Although Ammonius Saccas was a Platonist (105), Origen's explanation of freedom "proceeds along standard Stoic lines" (112). These, I add, are the same lines as Bardaisan's shortly before: see *Bardaisan on Human Nature*.

<sup>407</sup> An overall reliable (albeit not unproblematic) chronology of Origen's works is now found in R. Heine, *Origen. Scholarship in the Service of the Church* (Oxford, 2011), who underlines that the focus of Origen's thought shifted from his concern with Gnostic issues in Alexandria to the church–synagogue relationship and the salvation of the Jews in Caesarea. However, I would stress that Origen never abandoned his apokatastasis doctrine, which originated from his anti-Gnostic concerns. Heine thinks that Origen hesitated more and more to go beyond what Scripture says (244), which is right, but there can be no doubt that for Origen apokatastasis is precisely grounded in Scripture, in plenty of passages.

<sup>408</sup> See Ramelli, "The Universal and Eternal Validity."

The demons and Satan himself, as well as humans, will always maintain their free will, but they will be saved because the force of Christ's cross is so great as to be sufficient to save even them. This salvation will take place, not automatically or necessarily, but through conversion, through a healing performed by Christ in his capacity as the supreme Physician (a characteristic that Clement, too, loved to ascribe to Christ and whose relevance to Clement's and Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis is all too evident).<sup>409</sup> For "nothing is impossible for the Omnipotent; no being is incurable [*insanabile*] for the One who created it" (*Princ.* 3,6,5). Not even the devil is incurable, because he too is a creature of God, and his Creator will be able to heal even him. Here, I believe, Origen is echoing, and deliberately correcting, Plato, who thought that some sinners are "incurable" and will therefore remain in Tartarus forever.<sup>410</sup> In order to claim that nobody is in fact

<sup>409</sup> See at least S. Fernández, *Cristo médico, según Orígenes* (Rome, 1999); cf. Th. de Bruyn, "Appeals to Jesus as the One 'Who Heals Every Illness and Every Infirmary,'" in *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. DiTommaso–L. Turcescu (Leiden, 2008), Ch. 4; M. Dörnemann, *Krankheit und Heilung in der Theologie der frühen Kirchenväter* (Tübingen, 2003), esp. Chs. 5–9 on *Christus medicus* in Patristic authors.

<sup>410</sup> According to Plato, some who are immersed in evil have become "incurable" (ἀνίατοι); thus, their souls, after their death, cannot be healed by purifying suffering and return to the contemplation of the Ideas, but will be imprisoned in hell eternally. In *Resp.* 615E3 Plato observes that the worst sinners are incurable and therefore will never leave their place of punishment: "We suddenly saw him down there, and others—most of them tyrants, but there were also some private citizens who had committed serious sins—, who believed they were finally about to go up, but whom the opening did not receive, but it moaned every time one of these people who were in such a situation of incurability [ἀνιάτως ἐχόντων] in respect to wickedness, or one who had not paid enough, attempted to go up." Those who finish paying their debt with justice can exit the place of punishment at a certain point, but those who are utterly incurable will never finish paying, and thus will never leave "hell." In *Phaed.* 113E2, too, Plato claims that those who are incurable due to the seriousness of their sins are destined to Tartarus, from where they will never be released: "Those who seem to be in an incurable condition [ἀνιάτως ἔχειν] due to the enormity of their sins, having committed, for instance, many grave profanations of temples, or many illicit murders, or other similar crimes, well, the appropriate Fate throws these people into Tartarus, from where they never exit." In *Gorg.* 525C2, Plato, after remarking that only through suffering is it possible to get rid of evil, states that those who committed extremely serious sins have become incurable. As a consequence, their torments, which are described again as eternal, do not achieve their purification, but are retributive: "As for those who commit the most extreme kinds of injustice and because of such crimes have become incurable [ἀνίατοι], these people provide examples to others. They are no longer useful to themselves in anything, precisely because they are incurable, but they are useful to others, who see them endure the greatest and most painful and dreadful sufferings perpetually, due to their sins." Origen ruled out that God may inflict a merely retributive punishment, one that does not purify and instruct the sinner. This is why he could not conceive of literally eternal punishments.

"incurable"—not even the devil—Origen resorts to the argument of God's omnipotence (already used by Jesus in Matth 19:25–26 and Mark 10:26–27, precisely in relation to the final salvation) and the corollary argument from creation: God the Logos created the devil; God the Logos will therefore be able to heal even him. For the healing power of the Logos is superior to the power of sin: "in souls, there is no illness caused by evilness [ἀπὸ κακίας]<sup>411</sup> that is *impossible to cure* [ἀδύνατον θεραπευθῆναι] *for God the Logos*, who is superior to all" (CC 8,72). Those who seem to be incurable, like the devil, are not incurable for the Logos, which is active in every rational creature (*Princ.* 1,3,5–6: "The Father's and Son's action is directed to saints and sinners alike [...] because all rational beings participate in God's Logos, and for this reason they carry in themselves, so to say, seeds of wisdom and justice [...] Christ is in the heart of all, qua Logos: by virtue of participation in it, all are endowed with *logos*"). This is why "many prophecies mysteriously [ἐν ἀπορρήτοις] speak of the *complete elimination* [παντελοῦς ἀναιρέσεως] *of evil* and the *rectification of every soul* [διορθώσεως πάσης ψυχῆς]" (ibid.). If they speak "mysteriously" it is both because those passages have a spiritual and mystical meaning, and because universal salvation cannot be preached publicly to all, since it could be dangerous for the immature who do good out of fear and not out of love (1 John 4:17–19), a real concern for Origen.<sup>412</sup> On the other hand, this passage is a further proof that for Origen the apokatastasis doctrine is grounded in Scripture: it is announced by the prophets, proclaimed by Peter in Acts, by Paul especially in 1 Cor 15 and other passages of his, and alluded to in a number of other Biblical verses.

Origen thought that the devil will be saved not as devil, enemy, and death,<sup>413</sup> but as a creature of God, after he has been healed and is no enemy

<sup>411</sup> The illness of the soul, caused by sin, which can bring about the death of the soul, is also described by Origen as the weakening and the death of Christ in the soul, e.g. in *Hom. in Iud.* 2,2: *ne umquam accidat nobis ut Iesus Christus, posteaquam surrexit a mortuis, rursum moriatur in nobis. Quid enim prode est si in aliis vivat ex virtute, et in me moriatur ex infirmitate peccati? [...] Quid mihi prode est si apud alium ex bonis studiis, ex bona fide, ex bonis operibus pascitur et reficitur, apud me autem et in corde meo per malas cogitationes et desideria nefanda, per studia pessima suffocatur quodammodo et necatur?*

<sup>412</sup> Scott, "Guarding the Mysteries." This point will be further developed in a separate, systematic study concerning the reasons for the rejection of the apokatastasis doctrine on the part of the "Church of the Empire."

<sup>413</sup> This is why in *Comm. in Rom.* 8,8,46–49 and 68–70 he says that of Satan qua Satan *nec in fine saeculi erit ulla conuersio*, whereas Israel will convert and be restored at the end of this aeon. At the same time, it is also probable that Origen meant that, while all of Israel will be restored at the end of this aeon, Satan will not yet be restored: *illorum enim uel in fine saeculi conuersio erit, tunc cum plenitudo gentium subintrauerit et omnis Israhel saluus fiet;*

any more, but has returned to the Good, that is, to God. Also, in *Comm. in Io.* 32,3,30–34 Origen identifies the *telos* with the restoration even of the devil, after all the others:

You will understand the different orders of those who will be made alive in Christ, at the fulfilling of the statement, “The Father has handed *all* to him,” if you pay attention to the claim, “Christ is the first fruits, then those who belong to Christ, at his coming, and then the *τέλος* will come” [1 Cor 15:24]. This *τέλος* will indeed take place on Christ’s coming, when he will hand the Kingdom to God the Father, after annihilating all principalities, authorities, and powers [...] then, he of whom it is written that “He exalted himself before the Lord almighty” will be among those who submit, conquered because he has *yielded to the Logos*, and subjected to God’s image, becoming a stool for his feet. Thus he contemplates the *salvific economy*, which *leads to the good τέλος*.

In the very end, the devil himself will voluntarily submit to Christ-Logos and will thereby be saved. He will not be saved before submitting. Indeed, in his *Letter to Friends in Alexandria*, which he wrote with the intention of defending himself from his contemporaries’ charges, also denouncing the falsification of his words and works,<sup>414</sup> Origen did state that not even a fool would maintain that the devil is to be saved, since not even sinners will enter the Kingdom of God, clearly meaning that *until* they are sinners and have not repented they will not enter. Likewise, neither will the devil, until he repents:

Jerome *Apol. c. Ruf.* 2,18: *eiciuntur de regno caelorum non solum qui grandia peccauerunt [...], sed et qui minora delinquerint [...]* ascribunt nobis et doctrinae nostrae blasphemiam [...] patrem malitiae et perditionis eorum qui de regno Dei eiciuntur dicant posse saluari, quod ne mente quidem quis captus dicere potest.

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*istius autem qui de caelo cecidisse dicitur nec in fine saeculi erit ulla conuersio [...] huiusmodi esse delicta in quibus qui ceciderit resurgat et esse alia in quibus qui ceciderit [sc. the devil] non resurgat nec in consummatione saeculi.* The case is of the end of the aeon, not of *all* aeons.

<sup>414</sup> See Rufinus *De adult. 7: ipsius epistula quam scribit a quosdam caros suos Alexandriam*. Heraclas too wrote to pope Fabian accusing Origen of supporting the salvation of the devil; Origen had to send a letter of self-defence to Fabian (*Hier. Ep.* 84,10). See M. Simonetti, “Origene in occidente prima della controversia,” *Augustinianum* 46 (2006) 25–34. Many rehearsed this charge against Origen (supporting the salvation of the devil). See Jerome *Ep.* 124,9; Theophilus *ap. Jerome(?) Ep.* 92,2; 96,8; Jerome *In Io.* 19; Augustine *CD* 21,17. On Origen’s letter see H. Crouzel, “A Letter from Origen to Friends in Alexandria,” in *The Heritage of the Early Church*, eds. D. Neiman–M. Schatkin (Rome, 1973), 135–150; Prinzivalli, “La controversia,” 44; Holliday, “Will Satan”; I. Ramelli, “Decadence Denounced in the Controversy over Origen: Giving up Direct Reading of Sources and Counteractions,” in *Décadence*, eds. M. Formisano–Th. Fuhrer (Heidelberg, 2013).



Rufinus *De adult.* 7: ascribunt nobis et doctrinae nostrae crimen blasphemiae [...] dicentes (adserere) me patrem malitiae ac perditionis eorum qui de regno Dei eiciuntur, id est diabolum, esse saluandum, quod ne aliquis quidem mente motus et manifeste insaniens dicere potest.

The devil is not to be saved as devil and as the cause of the sin of many, but as a creature of God, and not immediately and necessarily, but after conversion and purification, as is the case with sinners: as long as they are sinners they will *not* enter the Kingdom. But they will after purification. Jerome *Apol. c. Ruf.* 2,19, reports a debate between Candidus, a Valentinian, and Origen. The former maintained that the devil was evil by nature, and for this reason he could not be saved (*diabolum pessimae esse naturae et quae saluari numquam possit*), while the latter—in accord with his anti-Valentinian polemic<sup>415</sup>—maintained that the devil was not evil in his nature, but in his will; therefore, his nature or substance was not doomed to perish, but he could be saved, clearly by a change of will (*non eum periturae esse substantiae, sed uoluntate propria corruisse, et posse saluari*). Candidus then spread the false information that Origen thought that the nature of the devil will necessarily be saved (*quasi Origenes dixerit diaboli naturam esse saluandam*), whereas Origen insisted so much on the freedom of will: the devil will be saved if and in that he converts to the Good, not automatically. This debate with Candidus confirms that, as I argued,<sup>416</sup> Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis was based on his anti-Valentinian theodicy.

<sup>415</sup> The very same polemic, likewise in reference to the devil, is carried on in *Princ.* 1,7,3: not even the devil was incapable of good, but he was once good and inhabited Paradise with the Cherubs (Ez 28:13ff.); then he detached himself from the Good and turned to evil. Heracleon the Valentinian, on the contrary, like Candidus claimed that the devil was evil φυσικῶς (fr. 47). Origen refutes this view in *Comm. in Io.* 20,28[22]; 23–24[20]; *Hom. in Iud.* 8,4. He reads Ez 28:12–19 in reference to Satan, e.g. in *Hom. in Ez.* 13: *Princeps Tyri: nec putandum est hunc hominem esse [...] non esse principes corporeos de quibus nunc quaeritur*. On the interpretation of this passage in reference to Satan in early Christianity see H.M. Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre. The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28:1–19 in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, 2012). A rabbinic tradition, instead, interpreted the text as a reference to Adam.

<sup>416</sup> In "La coerenza." On Valentinianism in Alexandria in the day of Origen: C. Marksches, "Valentinianische Gnosis in Alexandrien und Ägypten," in *Origeniana VIII*, 331–346. Origen's patron, Ambrose, notoriously was an ex-Valentinian (see Eus. *HE* 6,23; A. Monaci, "Origene e Ambrogio," in *Origeniana VIII*, 165–194). "Gnostics," perhaps Valentinians, were at the school of Plotinus. See most recently (with a reassessment) J.-M. Narbonne, *Plotinus in Dialogue with the Gnostics* (Leiden, 2011); my review in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2011.10.25. M.J. Edwards, "Porphyry's *Cave of the Nymphs* and the Gnostic Controversy," *Hermes* 124 (1996) 88–100 thinks that Porphyry wrote his *De antro Nympharum* against the background of his debate with the "Gnostics." While Eusebius ascribes to Ambrose the organisation of scribes for Origen, Photius (*Bibl. Cod.* 121, 94a Bekker) attributes it to Hippolytus, whose esteem for

Exactly the doctrine of free will was the core of Origen's anti-Valentinian polemic, on the one side, and, on the other side, of his criticism of the Stoic ("pagan") doctrine of apokatastasis. The latter, as I have already illustrated,<sup>417</sup> was based on an infinite repetition of aeons in which the same people will behave in exactly the same way. I have already pointed out extensively<sup>418</sup> how Origen countered this conception, constructing his own doctrine of apokatastasis in opposition to the Stoic one: (1) not with an infinite repetition of aeons, but with an end of all aeons which will be marked precisely by the eventual apokatastasis; (2) not with a necessary repetition of choices and behaviours in every aeon, but with the spiritual development of rational creatures in every aeon; the aeons will thus be the theatre of the exercise of rational creatures' free will and their education. In Origen's theory, the sequence of aeons is aimed at giving to all *logika* the time and possibility to acquire, by learning and purification, the spiritual maturity required to voluntarily adhere to the Good. This is clear, for instance, from *Princ.* 2,3,1:

Likewise, I deem it necessary to investigate whether after this aeon there will be a correction and *purification*, even bitter and painful, for those who have not wanted to obey the word of God, and, on the other hand, *teaching and rational education* for others, thanks to which those who already during this life have devoted themselves to this study will be able to make progress [...] And it is necessary to investigate whether after these facts there will be the end of all, or, for the sake of the *correction and purification of those who will still need this, there will be another aeon* [...] and whether there will come a stage in which there will be *no longer any aeon*, whether there has already existed a stage in which there was no aeon, whether there have been and there will be more than one aeon, and whether it will ever happen that there exists one aeon that is perfectly identical to another.

The last question is clearly oriented, once more, against the Stoic notion of aeons that are all identical to one another; Origen's solution is a resounding "no." It is interesting to remark, in this connection, that already Tatian, in *Or.* 6, sharply criticised the Stoic notion of the infinite succession of identical aeons, to which he opposed the Christian view of a limited series of ages, not

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Origen he underlines: "Hippolytus is said to have imitated Origen in his homilies to the people. He was friends with Origen to the utmost degree and loved his works, to the point of exhorting him to comment on the holy scripture. This is why he put at his disposal seven tachygraphers and as many calligraphers, paying them himself. He did him this service, and continued to insistently ask him for that exegetical work, so that in a letter he is called by Origen ἐργοδιώκτης. Hippolytus in turn is said to have written many works."

<sup>417</sup> See above in this same chapter, the first section of the chapter.

<sup>418</sup> See again the first section of the present chapter.

identical to one another, and culminating in the eventual resurrection: “At the end of the world, there will be the resurrection of bodies, not in the way the Stoics think—that there are periodic cycles in which the same things happen again and again, with no useful aim—; rather, after the end of the ages of human history, humans will endure eternally, and there will be their gathering for the Judgement.” Origen, like Gregory of Nyssa, knew Tatian’s work.

Opposite to the Stoics, Origen maintained an ethical conception of the aeons, in that their succession and organisation is not necessary and repetitive, but depends each time on the free choices of the *logika*. This also opposed Gnostic predestinationism, against which indeed Origen constructed his own protology and doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>419</sup> An aeon must come to an end because the evil that is in it must be eliminated, but the *logika* themselves survive into the next aeon, whose structure depends on their past choices, and this until the end of aeons. Aeons are the diastematic dimensions where rational creatures use their free will and experience the consequences of this use, but not without the assistance of divine providence. This is how they all will be purified and illuminated, and thus will attain the knowledge of the Good, i.e. God, and therefore will adhere to it. Origen opposes the Stoic theory of aeons that are τεταγμένοι ἀνακυκλήσεις happening ἐξ ἀνάγκης; if this were true, Jesus’s sojourn on earth would not be one, which indeed happened once and for all (ἅπαξ), but many, one for each aeon, and each time he should do the same things (CC 4,67–68). Origen’s defence of the *logika*’s free will and his notion of the centrality of Christ’s work in salvation history determine the difference between his own notion of the aeons and that of the Stoics, but also that of the “Gnostics.”

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<sup>419</sup> Ramelli, “La coerenza.” Origen presents his polemics in many passages, especially in *Princ.* 3, devoted to freewill, a hot issue in the philosophy of his day. Straight from *Princ.* 1*praef.* 5, contrasting astral determinism, Origen argues that the Church holds as a dogma that every *logikon* is endowed with freewill and not subject to necessity. Origen carries on this discussion in several commentaries on OT books, such as *Hom. in Iud.* 3,3 or *Hom. in Ios.* 7,4, and in *Philoc.* 23, mostly based on his Commentary on Genesis. Against “Gnostic” and astrological determinism, he argues that God is not responsible for the different conditions of the *logika* (*Princ.* 1,7,4). Present sufferings are reckoned either pedagogical strategies applied by God, or a result of one’s demerits, or a choice of generous souls who are willing to suffer in this life in order to assist the process of salvation (*Comm. in Io.* 2,31,187–188; *Princ.* 2,9,7). On Origen’s polemic against Gnostic predestination: A. Dihle, “Die Vorstellung philosophischer Lehren vom Schicksals und Freiheit in der Frühchristlichen Theologie,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 30 (1987) 14–28; H. Crouzel, “Theological Construction and Research: Origen on Freewill,” in Drewery–Bauckham, *Scripture, Tradition*, 239–265; H. Benjamins, *Eingeordnete Freiheit. Freiheit und Vorsehung bei Origenes* (Leiden, 1994).

Origen's concept of the cosmos, taking its distance from the necessarianism of Stoic cyclical cosmology, emphasises the *logika's* self-determination; on this point, which was both anti-Stoic<sup>420</sup> and anti-"Gnostic,"<sup>421</sup> Origen builds up his theodicy, which also encompasses his apokatastasis theory. But it is not enough that this doctrine stands from the philosophical viewpoint; it must first and foremost be attested by the Bible, and Origen does find a great deal of support for this theory in Scripture.<sup>422</sup> In his view, the

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<sup>420</sup> The same criticism of Stoic necessitarianism, although with no emphasis on the notion of cyclical repetition of identical aeons, was already conducted by Justin, who highlighted the importance of human free will. See *II Apol.* 7,3–8: "Humans do not do or suffer actions by fate, but each one behaves rightly or makes mistakes by free will [...] The Stoics, *having failed to understand this*, claimed that everything happens according to the necessity of fate [...] But Stoic philosophers, too, in their ethical theory, strongly recommend that one do given things and abstain from others; as a consequence, it is clear that they err in the theory of principles and incorporeal things. For if they claim that human deeds are determined by fate, or that God is not at all different from those realities that change and are continually transformed into one another, it will be clear that they can only conceive of corruptible realities and consider God to extend both in the parts and in the whole universe, among all defects—that is, that vice and virtue are nothing, which goes against every wisdom, reason, and intellect." Justin sees the error of fatalistic determinism as dependent on Stoic immanentism. *Ibid.* 8,1 he admits that, in ethics, the Stoics are on the right path. The Stoic system, in his view, is intrinsically inconsistent (good ethics vs. bad metaphysics).

<sup>421</sup> This point is so important for Origen that not only does he insist on it everywhere (sample list in my "La coerenza"), but already at the very beginning of *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, *praef.* 5, he includes among the undisputed teachings of the church "that every rational soul is endowed with free will [...] we are not subject to necessity in such a way as to be forced to do good or evil even if we do not want." In this way he excluded Valentinian determinism from the church. Among its clearest refutations are *Princ.* 3,6,6 (all *logika* have the same nature but differ in their free choices) and 1,8,1–2: "everything is assigned by God, the absolutely righteous and impartial sovereign of the universe, according to the merits, the capacity, the activity, and the intelligence of each one [...] otherwise we shall incur the stupid and impious myths of those who imagine different spiritual natures, therefore created by different creators, whereas it is absurd to attribute the creation of different rational natures even just to one and the same Creator [...] they cannot explain the cause of the diversity among them. [...] These claims are refuted and rejected by the argument expounded above [1,5,7], which demonstrates that the cause of diversity and variety in the single creatures depends on their quicker or slower movements towards the Good or evil, and *not on a partiality of the One who has ordered all*." Specific examples adduced by the "Gnostics" are refuted: "they claim that Paul and Peter belonged to the spiritual nature," the class of *πνευματικοί*, but Paul was initially a persecutor and Peter denied Christ. The "Gnostic" way of evading the problem, to maintain that it was another Paul, or another Peter, to sin in him, is invalid, since both apostles were then contrite, thus showing their responsibility. For problems related to the definition of "Valentinian determinism" see my "Apokatastasis in Coptic Gnostic Texts from Nag Hammadi and Clement's and Origen's Apokatastasis," *Journal of Coptic Studies* 14 (2012) 33–45.

<sup>422</sup> See my "Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism."

end toward which all aeons are oriented is the *telos*,<sup>423</sup> the eventual universal restoration. It is particularly meaningful that in *Princ.* 3,3,4 Origen, immediately after accusing the Stoic notion of apokatastasis of denying human free will, *ibid.* 3,5 asserts that there will come an end of all aeons, which will coincide with the final apokatastasis, “when all will be no more in an aeon, but God will be ‘all in all’”:

If there is anything superior to the aeons [αἰῶνες], so that one should think of aeons [αἰῶνες] in relation to creatures, but, in relation to those superior to visible creatures, one should think of what there will be in the *final restoration* [ἀποκατάστασις] [...], we shall probably understand what there will be *at the end of all as superior to any aeon* [αἰών]. I am induced to think so *by the authority of Scripture*, which says: “in the αἰών and further.”<sup>424</sup> The fact that it says “further” lets us understand that it means *something more than an aeon*. And, please, consider whether the Saviour’s words, “I want them to be with me where I am,” and, “As you and I are one and the same thing, so they too may be one in us” [John 17:24.21], may indicate something *superior to the αἰών and the αἰῶνες*, and perhaps even *to the αἰῶνες τῶν αἰώνων*, that is, when *no longer all will be in the αἰών, but “God will be all in all.”*<sup>425</sup>

All creatures will pass from being in an aeon, and therefore being in history, to being permeated by God and participating in divine life, which is the final θέωσις I have dealt with. In *Princ.* 2,3,1, likewise, Origen foresees “a stage in which there will be no aeon any more.” The same concept underlies *Comm. in Io.* 13,3, in which Origen explains that “αἰώνιος life” will not be the ultimate stage. For “αἰώνιος life” will be the life in the next aeon, in Christ, but even that aeon will finish and therefore after “life αἰώνιος” there will come the eventual apokatastasis, in which all will be in the Father, or better in the Holy Trinity, and God will be “all in all”: “After αἰώνιος life a leap will take place and all will pass from the aeons to the Father, who is *beyond αἰώνιος* life. For Christ is Life, but the Father, who is ‘greater than Christ,’<sup>426</sup> is greater than life.” Likewise, *Sel. in Ps.* 60 expresses a typically Origenian thought by stating that, after the sojourn in the aeons, there will come the dwelling, not only in the Son, but also in the Father, or rather in the Holy Trinity,

<sup>423</sup> For the importance of Origen’s philosophy of history and its orientation to the *eskhaton* see Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History* with my review in *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscholastica* 100 (2008) 453–458.

<sup>424</sup> Mich 4:5: εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ ἐπέκεινα.

<sup>425</sup> 1 Cor 15:28. See my “Christian Soteriology.”

<sup>426</sup> This is not a sign of Origen’s purported subordinationism (on which see briefly M.J. Edwards, “Nicene Theology and the Second God,” in *Studia Patristica* XL, eds. F. Young–M. Edwards–P. Parvis [Leuven, 2006], 191–195, *praes.* 192–293, and with many further elements my “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism”), but a quotation from John 14:28.

which is apokatastasis: “When one is perfected, one sojourns through the aeons in that tabernacle [sc. Christ, qua αἰώνιος life] [...] For this tabernacle is αἰώνιος. This tabernacle, to be sure, is a state of perfection, which makes it the Holy of Holies; however, there is a stage that is *beyond* this and superior to rational creatures. In that state, rational creatures will be in the Father and the Son, or rather *in the Trinity*. This is why it is said ‘to sojourn in the aeons [αἰῶνες], and not ‘to dwell stably in the tabernacle.’” That is to say, it is impossible to remain eternally in the aeons (indeed, Origen was full aware that αἰώνιος does not mean “eternal”<sup>427</sup>), because the succession of aeons will come to an end with the eventual apokatastasis. Indeed, *Sel. in Ps.* 9, with an echo of 1 Cor 15:25–28, declares that the Lord “will reign through the aeons [αἰῶνες] *until* he has put all his enemies under his feet.” This will happen at the end of all aeons, after which there will come the absolute eternity or αἰδιότης of apokatastasis; then, nobody will be an enemy any more and evil will have disappeared. In *Hom. in Ex.* 6,13, similarly, Origen foresees the end of all aeons: “Whenever Scripture says, ‘from aeon to aeon,’ the reference is to an interval of time, and it is clear that *it will have an end*. And if Scripture says, ‘in another aeon,’ what is indicated is clearly a longer time, and yet *an end is still fixed*. And when the ‘aeons of the aeons’ are mentioned, a *certain limit is again posited*, perhaps unknown to us, but surely established by God.”<sup>428</sup> In sum, whenever Scripture speaks of aeons, these expressions cannot refer to eternity, which is only of God; this also entails clearly that all biblical expressions such as “αἰώνιον fire,” “αἰώνιος death,” or “αἰώνιος punishment” cannot be interpreted as meaning “eternal” fire, death, or punishment, because there will come an end of all αἰῶνες, when there will be the “jump” from the aeons to God. The perfection that is reached at the end of all aeons, in the eventual apokatastasis, is a “coming to be in God,” as is repeated by Origen still in his Commentary on Romans: “the perfection and end of all beings will be found in God, when God will be ‘all in all’” (8,13,9); “Those who will have been reformed and corrected will remain steadfast in its perfection [...] The fact of closely adhering to the culmination of its perfection is said to take place in God” (ibid. 3,10,3). This dwelling in God will come about at the end of all aeons.

In *Comm. in Io.* 10,39 Origen describes apokatastasis as a passage into the Trinity at the end of time: “the (scriptural) expressions that refer to the preparation of the stones, which are pulled up and prepared for building up

<sup>427</sup> See my “Origene ed il lessico.”

<sup>428</sup> Analysis in my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'Anima*, first Integrative Essay.

the construction, seem to me to certainly indicate the totality of time, that is, the extension [διάστημα] that is necessary (for rational creatures) to finally *come to be in the eternal Trinity*.<sup>429</sup> With the end of the aeons, thus, there will be a “leap”—to use Origen’s own words—into the absolute eternity of divine life. For only God is eternal in the proper and absolute sense. Thus, for instance, in *Hom. 2 in Ps. 38*, 11, Origen addresses God with the words, *Tu enim aeternus es solus*. That *aeternus* here means “without beginning or end” and corresponds to αἰδιος is clear from what he adds immediately after, by way of contrast: *nos quantum invenitur habemus initium*; indeed, each creature *tunc esse coepit quando Tu voluisti*. Nothing in creation is eternal; God is. As a consequence, that life which will be a participation in God’s life is eternal proper, but not death, which is a consequence of sin—deprived of ontological consistence—and was not created by God. This is why Origen in a syllogism based on the logical notion of “contradictory” can proclaim that Life is eternal (being Christ), but death cannot possibly be so:

Uerumtamen, quamvis permaneat quis in peccato, quamvis sub mortis regno et potestate perduret, *non tamen ita aeternum istud mortis esse arbitror regnum ut est uitae atque iustitiae*, maxime cum nouissimum inimicum mortem ab apostolo audiam *destruendum*. Si eadem aeternitas mortis ponatur esse quae uitae est, iam non erit mors uitae contraria, sed aequalis: aeternum enim aeterno contrarium non erit, sed idem. Nunc autem certum est mortem uitae esse contrarium: certum est ergo quod, si uita aeterna est, *mors esse non possit aeterna*. [...] Cum enim *mors animae, quae est nouissimus inimicus*, fuerit destructa, etiam haec communis mors, quam illius uelut umbram esse diximus, necessario abolebitur, et *regnum mortis pariter cum morte destructum erit*.

However, even if one may remain in sin, even if one may endure under the kingly power of death, *I do not think that this reign of death is eternal as that of Life and Justice is*, especially in that I hear from the Apostle that *the last enemy, death, must be destroyed* [1Cor 15:26]. For should one suppose that the eternity of death is the same as that of Life, death will no longer be the contradictory opposite of Life, but equal to it. For “eternal” is not the contradictory of “eternal,” but the same thing. Now, it is certain that death is the contradictory of Life; therefore, it is certain that, if Life is eternal, *death cannot possibly be eternal*. [...] For, when the death of the soul, which is the very last enemy, has been destroyed, also this common death (which, as I said, is a sort of shadow of the death of the soul) will necessarily be abolished, and *the kingdom of death, along with death itself, will be destroyed*.

(*Comm. in Rom. 5,7*)

<sup>429</sup> On the concept of time as extension in Origen see P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time* (Leiden, 2006), with my review in *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscholastica* 99 (2007) 177–181.

Origen, like Philo, admits that “the soul is mortal of the real death” (*Dial. Her.* 26), but unlike Philo he envisages the ultimate vanishing of the death of the soul: in his view all rational creatures, even if dead due to sin, will return to Life (and this essentially because of Christ’s work of resurrection, not only physical but also spiritual).<sup>430</sup> Origen, the author of the *Hexapla*, proves to be conscious of the various meanings of αἰών and αἰώνιος in Scripture, whose Hebrew correspondent he knew as polysemic. He was well aware that αἰών and αἰώνιος in Scripture almost never imply eternity: “In Scriptures, αἰών is sometimes found in the sense of something that knows no end; at times it designates something that has no end in the present world, but will have in the future one; sometimes it means a certain stretch of time; or again the duration of the life of a single person is called αἰών” (*Comm. in Rom.* 6,5).<sup>431</sup> The polysemy of αἰών is clear. Origen goes on to consider that the relevant adjective αἰώνιος, if applied to life, means “eternal” because Christ himself is Life, but, as he declares in *Comm. in Rom.* 6,7, αἰώνιος death cannot be conceived as eternal.

Origen’s reflection on eternity must be taken into careful account, because he meditated to such a depth on eternity and time. Indeed, he is not only the greatest Patristic exegete and theoriser of scriptural allegoresis,<sup>432</sup> but also the greatest Patristic philosopher.<sup>433</sup> What is more, his own exegesis is philosophical and keeps the philosophical role that allegory played in Stoicism and Platonism.<sup>434</sup> And in turn his philosophy is grounded in the exegesis of Scripture; this is why he included the treatment of biblical exegesis in his *philosophical* masterpiece, in Book 4 of Περὶ ἀρχῶν. He was well

<sup>430</sup> See my “Philosophical Allegoresis.” I plan to return to Philo’s and Origen’s notions of death and apokatastasis of the soul, to investigate Origen’s close dependence on Philo but also his very different conclusions, and explain their reasons.

<sup>431</sup> Origen also draws a distinction between αἰώνιος life in general and αἰώνιος life in Christ: *Sicut ergo semper cum domino esse finem non habet, ita et uita aeterna nullum finem habere credenda est [...] ego non puto etiam hoc uacuum esse, quod ad uitam aeternam addit ‘in Christo domino nostro’; sed quia fortassis sciri uoluit aliud esse uitam aeternam solum, et aliud uitam aeternam in Christo Jesu* (*Comm. in Rom.* 6,5). Origen is clear in 5,7 that αἰώνιος life is eternal, but αἰώνιος death is not so.

<sup>432</sup> On Origen’s spiritual exegesis see at the very least E. Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture within Origen’s Exegesis* (Atlanta, 2005); I. Ramelli, “Origen and the Stoic Allegorical Tradition: Continuity and Innovation,” *Invigilata Lucernis* 28 (2006) 195–226; Ead., “The Philosophical Stance of Allegory.”

<sup>433</sup> See, e.g., Ramelli, “Origen, Patristic Philosophy,” and further arguments in “Origen the Christian Middle-Neoplatonist.”

<sup>434</sup> “The Philosophical Stance of Allegory.” On the philosophical import of allegoresis in Stoicism see my *Allegoria*, I (Milan, 2004).



acquainted with the concept of eternity and time and the relevant terminology both in philosophy (Stoic, Platonic, Aristotelian) and in Scripture.<sup>435</sup> For the latter he could avail himself of his own *Hexapla*, which supplied him with a synopsis of all available Greek versions—among which the LXX which he deemed inspired<sup>436</sup>—as well as the Hebrew text and its transliteration into Greek. In addition to Scripture and Hellenistic and contemporary philosophy, Origen was also conversant with “Gnostic” terminology and the special meaning of αἰών (“Aeon,” each component of the Pleroma) in some Gnostic circles, particularly among Valentinians. Panayiotis Tzamalikos has rightly noticed, with his usual perspicacity, that Origen refused to call αἰών the divine life, but he thinks that this precise choice is due to Origen’s refusal to take over Plato’s terminology<sup>437</sup> (in which αἰών is the technical term for atemporal eternity, transcending all time<sup>438</sup>). I suspect that it is rather due to Origen’s refusal to appropriate *Gnostic* terminology. Even from the lexical point of view, Origen wanted to oppose “Gnosticism,” in this specific case the “Valentinian” system of the Aeons. The Valentinians in turn drew on Plato’s definition of αἰών, but they developed it into the notion of “Aeon” as divine and living (this is clear already from Valentinus’s fr. 5, preserved by Clement).<sup>439</sup> Origen, who spent his whole life fighting “Gnosticism,” and especially Valentinian determinism, and who elaborated his philosophy of history and his very doctrine of apokatastasis in opposition to Valentinian predestinationism,<sup>440</sup> refused to reproduce “Gnostic” terminology, in which every αἰών is a deity and constitutes the divine Pleroma. This is why Origen considers an αἰών to be, not at all divine life, but an aeon, a span of time; therefore, as such, it does not belong to the divine sphere, which transcends time—as Plato himself taught, and Origen agreed—but to the diastematic sphere, that of time, space, dimensions, and extension.

<sup>435</sup> Detailed investigation in my “Origene ed il lessico.”

<sup>436</sup> On the belief in the inspiration of the LXX in the early Church see D.K. Kranz, *Ist die griechische Übersetzung der heiligen Schrift der LXX inspiriert? Eine Antwort nach den Zeugnissen der Kirchenväter* (Rome, 2005). On the *Hexapla* see e.g. my “Origen and the Stoic Allegorical Tradition” and Grafton–Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation*; on its preservation in the Syriac tradition see at least T.M. Law, *Origenes Orientalis. The preservation of Origen’s Hexapla in the Syrohexapla of 3 Kingdoms* (Tübingen, 2011).

<sup>437</sup> P. Tzamalikos, *The Concept of Time in Origen* (Bern, 1991).

<sup>438</sup> Analysis in Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 12–17.

<sup>439</sup> *Strom.* 4,89,6–90,1: the κόσμος is the image of the αἰών and the αἰών is living: ὁπόσον ἐλάττων ἢ εἰκὼν τοῦ ζώντος προσώπου, τοσοῦτον ἦσσαν ὁ κόσμος τοῦ ζώντος αἰώνος [...] συνεργεῖ δὲ καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀόρατον εἰς πίστιν τοῦ πεπλασμένου. On this fragment see Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 465.

<sup>440</sup> Demonstration in I. Ramelli, “La coerenza.”

In this connection, it seems extremely significant to me that in *Comm. in Matth.* 17,33 Origen scorns the “Gnostic” myths of the various Aeons: “the mythopoiesis concerning the Aeons.” In particular, what Origen cannot accept especially in Heracleon, the “Valentinian” commentator on the Gospel of John,<sup>441</sup> is that he presupposes that these Aeons existed prior to the Logos (*Comm. in Io.* 2,14),<sup>442</sup> whereas for Origen, on the contrary, the Logos—God’s Son—preexists all aeons and is their creator. It is, again, in the framework of his anti-Valentinian polemic that Origen draws an opposition between divine life, which is absolutely eternal and is the life of the Holy Trinity, and the αἰών, which has a limited duration vis-à-vis the life of the Trinity: “The whole aeon [αἰών] is long in relation to us, but it is quite short, and is only tantamount to a few years, in relation to the life of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit” (*Comm. in Matth.* 15,31).<sup>443</sup>

Indeed, Origen’s definition of αἰών is the very opposite of the “Gnostic” idea of Aeon. He offers his definition in *Comm. in Eph.* p. 403, commenting on Eph 2:2: “the αἰών of this world.” He glosses this expression as follows: “The time that is coextensive [συμπαρεκτεινόμενος χρόνος] with the constitution of this world [τῇ τοῦτου τοῦ κόσμου κατασκευῇ] from the beginning to the end.” In Origen’s view, αἰών, and its derivative αἰώνιος, are far from indicating eternity or divine life, but they refer to a temporal interval. This is particularly manifest in *Sel. in Ez.* 16, where Origen is commenting on Ez 16:30, which speaks of three times. Origen declares that “these three times [χρόνοι] encompass the whole αἰών,” and interprets them as past, present, and future. Sometimes Origen describes the past or future as including a series of aeons, which are an expression of the flowing of time. Thus, for instance, the kingdom of God is described as the contemplation “of the past [γενόμενοι] aeons,” and the future is identified with “the aeons to come [γενησόμενοι]” (*Sel. in Ps.* 144). Aeons, being time, are composed of years and days (ibid. 76). This is how Origen interprets ἔτη αἰώνια, “remote years,” in Ps 76:6–7: as the years of past aeons (*circulos quoque annorum temporalium et praesentium refert ad antiquiores aliquos ac sempiternos annos, secundum eum qui dicebat, Et annos aeternos in mente habui: Comm. in Cant.* 3,13,21).

<sup>441</sup> Discussion of Heracleon’s identity as a “Valentinian” in M. Kaler–M.P. Bussièrès, “Was Heracleon a Valentinian? A New Look at Old Sources,” *Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006) 275–289.

<sup>442</sup> On Heracleon’s interpretation of the Logos in John’s Prologue see at least A. Wucherpfennig, “Gnostische Lektüre des Johannesprologs am Beispiel Herakleons,” in *Der Johannesprolog*, ed. G. Kruck (Darmstadt, 2009), 107–130.

<sup>443</sup> God’s life is the highest: G. Gruber, *Zoe: Wesen, Stufen und Mitteilung des wahren Lebens bei Origenes* (München, 1962).

Indeed, in an anti-Gnostic perspective, Origen lists time and aeons together, and opposes them to the eternity of the Trinity, here in particular God the Father and God's Son the Logos: "before any time [χρόνος] and aeon [αἰών] existed, in the beginning was the Logos and the Logos was with God" (*Comm. in Io.* 2,1). For the Logos, far from beginning to exist only after the aeons—as some "Gnostics" maintained—is rather the creator of all things, including aeons. The Logos "exists prior to all aeons. From here we learn that aeons have come to existence from non-being" (*Sel. in Ps.* 54). Indeed, to begin to exist at a certain point out of non-being is typical of creatures.<sup>444</sup> Origen had a precise scriptural basis to buttress his anti-Gnostic view that the aeons are not divine, but are rather creatures of God: Hebr 1:2, which declares that the αἰών was created by Christ. Origen relied on this passage to contend that aeons are creatures, made through the Son-Logos (*Comm. in Io.* 2,10).

Gregory of Nazianzus, a Platonising Christian himself and a follower of Origen, seems to me to confirm that Origen avoided connecting αἰών with divine life and therefore eternity, not to reject Plato, but to refute "Gnosticism." For Gregory, although he followed in Origen's footsteps in many respects, including the very terminology of eternity and time,<sup>445</sup> has no problem any more in attaching to αἰών the meaning of "eternity" as well. This Origen was unwilling to do, but Gregory could do tranquilly at the end of the fourth century, when "Gnostics," especially "Valentinians," did no longer pose a serious threat. This is why Gregory Nazianzen had no longer reasons to oppose and avoid the "Gnostic" terminology and "mythology of Aeons." Neither Gregory nor Origen were disturbed by Plato's use, but Origen was by the "Valentinian" conception of the Aeons, while Nazianzen was no longer. If the target of the polemic had been Plato, Gregory too would have avoided his terminology, but he did not. The real target of Origen's polemic—even in this case, as in so many others—were "Gnostics."

Origen's reflection on eternity and time is far both from "Valentinianism" and from the Stoic concept of an infinite repetition of aeons, which I have already illustrated. Eternity proper, as I mentioned, pertains only to the holy Trinity; whatever else can become eternal can do so only by grace and as a participation in the life of the divine Trinity—what will happen

<sup>444</sup> On *creatio ex nihilo* in Origen see my "The *Dialogue of Adamantius* as a Document of Origen's Authentic Thought? Part One," in *Studia Patristica* LII, eds. A. Brent-M. Vinzent (Leuven, 2012), 71–98, and "Part Two" forthcoming in *Studia Patristica* LIV, ed. M. Vinzent (Leuven, 2012), 1–48.

<sup>445</sup> Demonstration in Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 185–189.

to the elect in the final *θέωσις*. In Origen's works, *ἄϊδιος* is the technical term for what is eternal in the true and absolute sense, and as such it is only found in reference to God, who alone is eternal and immortal,<sup>446</sup> or, sometimes, in reference to eternal life, when Origen wants to stress that it will be eternal proper, as a participation in the life of God. Thus, for instance, Origen uses *ἄϊδιος* as a modifier of God's power and divinity, reign, or mercy.<sup>447</sup> In these cases, Origen often uses *ἄϊδιος* while commenting on, or glossing, scriptural passages with *αἰών* and *αἰώνιος* in reference to God. This means that he prefers to elucidate the biblical, ambiguous and polysemic term *αἰώνιος* with the technical *ἄϊδιος*, as a marker of eternity in the strict sense. Origen, like the Cappadocians after him, uses *ἄϊδιος*, again in its rigorously technical meaning, in the theological discussion on the coeternity and consubstantiality (*ὁμοουσία*) of the Persons—or better Hypostases—of the Trinity (e.g. *Philoc.* 15).<sup>448</sup>

Origen, as I have pointed out above, considered only life to be eternal, not death; this is also why, as I have systematically demonstrated elsewhere,<sup>449</sup> he uses *ἄϊδιος* only in reference to life, and not to death or punishment, fire or hell. Indeed, it is significant that Origen *never* uses this adjective in reference to otherworldly death, punishment, or fire. These are only called *αἰώνια*, because they endure in the future aeon(s), but not after the end of all aeons, in the absolute eternity of apokatastasis. This distinction is particularly clear even in a text preserved in Latin, *Hom. 4 in Ps. 36, 8*: “*Et non derelinquit Dominus sanctos suos, in aeternum conservabuntur.*” [...] *Ad futurum respicit tempus vel saeculum, cui conservabuntur sancti, ut deinceps in aeternitate perdurent.* Here the distinction is very clear between the future aeon, which will be still a temporal interval (*tempus vel saeculum*),<sup>450</sup> and the absolute

<sup>446</sup> *Fr. in Ps. ad Ps.* 101, 13, l. 7: “absolutely eternal, unalterable, and immortal.”

<sup>447</sup> *Philoc.* 15,6 = CC 6,4,11; 7,46,42; *Fr. in Ps. ad Ps.* 92,1–2, l. 42; l. 50.

<sup>448</sup> Origen is the initiator of the Trinitarian meaning of *ὑπόστασις* as individual substance. For the philosophical and medical background of this notion and its aftermath, even in “pagan” Neoplatonism, see I. Ramelli, “Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis,” *Harvard Theological Review* 105,3 (2012) 302–350. More generally on the notion of divine substance in early Christianity see H. Pietras, “Il concetto della sostanza divina all’inizio della Chiesa,” in *Metafisica e teologia. Il dibattito fondamentale*, ed. R. Wosniak (Krakow, 2008), 122–140. For Origen's application of the notion and terminology of *ὁμοουσία* to the Persons of the Trinity see M.J. Edwards, “Did Origen Apply the Word *Homoousios* to the Son?” *Journal of Theological Studies* 49 (1998) 658–670, and further arguments in my “Origen's Anti-Subordinationism.”

<sup>449</sup> “Origene ed il lessico.”

<sup>450</sup> That the future aeon is time and not eternity is clear, for instance, also from *Hom. in Ps. 36,10*: *Hoc dicit de illo tempore quod erit post hoc saeculum, tempore quo unusquisque pro malis suis recipiet poenas.*

eternity that will come after the end of all aeons: *deinceps* (sc. after the future aeon) in *aeternitate*. Clearly, eternity will come after the end of the future aeon(s).

Thus, at the end of all aeons, in the eventual apokatastasis, all will come to be, no longer in any aeon, but in God the Trinity, and in turn God will be “all in all.” The meaning of this Pauline sentence (1 Cor 15:28, Origen’s favourite passage in defence of apokatastasis) is explained especially in *Princ.* 3,6,2–3. Here, Origen first deduces the definitive eviction of evil from the presence of God “all in all,” given that it is impossible to admit that God may be found in evil, as I have already pointed out; then, he examines

What is this “all” that God will be “in all”? [...] It means that God will be “all” even in every individual creature. And God will be “all” in these creatures in the sense that whatever the rational intellect, freed from any dirtiness of sin and purified from any taint of evil, will be able to perceive, grasp and think, all this will be God [...], and so God will be all for this intellect [...], because evil will not exist any more: for such intellect, *God, untouched by evil, is all*. One who is always in the Good and for whom God is all, will no longer wish to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil [...] After removing every sense of evil, only he who is the sole good God will become *all for the creature returned to a state of soundness and purity* [...] and not only in few or in many, but *in all God will be all*, when at last there will be no more death, nor death’s sting, nor evil, most definitely: then God will truly be “all in all.”

This will also guarantee that in the final apokatastasis no further falls will take place. Origen argues on the basis of the similarity between ἀρχή and τέλος: “at the end of the word, which will be similar to the beginning, that condition which the rational nature enjoyed when it had not yet felt the need to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil *will be restored*” (ἀποκαθίστημι). The final state, however, will be *similar*, but not simply *identical*, to the beginning: it will be infinitely better, in that it will entail a voluntary adhesion to the Good, in love, after the completion of a spiritual development.<sup>451</sup> This is why, unlike the beginning, the *telos*, with the perfection of love (ἀγάπη), will never admit of falls. This is hinted at in *Schol. in Ap.* 21, which speaks of a person who has become a column in the Temple of God, “based on love,” which “could *never* end up out” (τεθεμελιωμένος ἐν ἀγάπῃ, οὐκ ἂν ποτε γένοιτο ἔξω), and, what is more, is argued in a more extensive and articulated way in *Comm. in Rom.* 5,10,158–240. The theoretical basis is for Origen that only God is good, since God is essential Goodness, and

<sup>451</sup> Full demonstration in my *Gregorio sull'anima*, Integrative Essay 1.

all other creatures simply participate in it and can thus fall from the Good. Only in the eventual apokatastasis will perfect love prevent every creature to detach itself from God-Good. This does not mean, though, that rational creatures will lose their free will. Indeed, Origen in the passage at stake begins with a refutation of those who thought that Christ's sacrifice would have to be repeated over and over again<sup>452</sup>—an accusation that was curiously levelled against him during the "Origenistic controversy," whereas it is clear that Origen himself disproved it—: *unde miror quosdam contra hanc euentissimam Pauli sententiam [Rom 6:9] uelle asserere quod in futuris iterum saeculis uel eadem uel similia pati necesse sit Christum ut liberari possint etiam hi quos in praesenti uita dispensationis eius medicina sanare non potuit*. The point of Origen's opponents is based on the possibility of ever new falls on the part of rational creatures. Origen is adamant that this is not at all what he personally teaches and in fact cannot be the case (*easdem etiam in futuris saeculis dispensationes a Christo repetenda esse arbitrantur. Sed ad haec nos breuiter prout possumus respondebimus*). Origen's reply is grounded in two main tenets:

- 1) it is impossible that Christ's sacrifice should be reiterated, because, even though it occurred once and for all, its effectiveness was such as to reach absolutely all rational creatures and all aeons; therefore, there will be no need to repeat it: *Semel Christus mortuus est peccato, et ultra iam non moritur, et quod uiuit uiuit Deo [...]* *Manere quidem naturae rationabili semper liberum arbitrium non negamus, sed tantam esse uim crucis Christi et mortis huius*, etc.: this is the passage I have already quoted (*Comm. in Rom.* 5,10,235–236 and 187–195). Hence, it is also clear that for Origen the salvation of all rational creatures entirely depends, not on a metaphysical necessity, but on Christ's cross (more on that below).
- 2) It is not the case that the fall of all rational creatures, humans and angels, will take place over and over again, indefinitely, because there will come an end of all aeons, in apokatastasis, when God will be "all in all," and from that condition no fall will occur any longer, because

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<sup>452</sup> Especially Jerome (after his U-turn), Theophilus (see Hier. *Ep.* 92,4), and Justinian in his letter to Men(n)as exemplify this accusation, probably based on *Princ.* 4.3. Even this passage, however, like *Comm. in Rom.* 4,10, can be understood not in the sense that Jesus will be crucified again for the sake of demons, but in the sense that his one crucifixion has a salvific effectiveness even for them, and also for the future aeons. See my "The Universal and Eternal Validity."

perfect love will prevent this. Once every *logikon* has reached perfection in love (some doing so earlier and some later), it will never fall again:

Quod autem sit quod in futuris saeculis *teneat arbitrii libertatem* ne rursum corruat in peccatum, breui nos sermone apostolus docet dicens: '*Caritas numquam cadit.*' [1 Cor 13:8: ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε (ἐκ)πίπτει]. Idcirco enim et fide et spe maior *caritas* dicitur quia sola erit per quam *delinqui ultra non poterit*. Si enim *in id anima perfectionis* ascenderit ut ex toto corde suo et ex tota mente sua et ex totis uiribus suis diligat Deum et proximum suum tamquam se ipsam, ubi erat peccati locum? [...] *Caritas omnem creaturam continebit a lapsu, tunc cum erit Deus omnia in omnibus.* [...] Tanta caritatis uis est ut ad se omnia trahat [...], maxime cum caritatis causas prior nobis dederit Deus qui unico Filio suo non pepercit, sed *pro nobis omnibus* tradidit.

(*Comm. in Rom.* 5,10,195–226)

Paul's core sentence, that "love never falls," was so paramount for Origen that he repeated it many times and based his argument on it also in *Comm. in Cant.* prol. 2,45.<sup>453</sup> Origen was probably also mindful of Clement's claim that "love does not allow one to sin" (*Strom.* 4,113,1), which in turn rested on Paul. The identification of *caritas* with the summit of perfection is also declared by Origen in *Comm. in Cant.* 1,6,8: *summa perfectionis in caritate consistit; caritas autem nihil iniquitatis admittit*; and *ibid.* prol. 2,43: *in caritatis perfectione et omne mandatum restaurari dicitur et legis virtus prophetarumque pendere*. The soteriological value of love is declared by Origen throughout his Commentary on the Song of Songs, for instance in prol. 3,23: *salutari in eum* [sc. the Logos] *amore succendi*, and 2,17: *salutare ab ipso vulnus accipiet et beato igne amoris eius ardebit*.<sup>454</sup> This is because love causes a rational creature to adhere to God entirely: ἡ γὰρ ἀγάπη κολλᾷ ἡμᾶς τῷ Θεῷ (*Hom. in Jer.* 5,2).

<sup>453</sup> *Caritas numquam cadit* [...] *in luctamine quoque eo quod est nobis adversus diabolum frequenter cadimus, non dubium quin ob quod non est in nobis caritas illa quae numquam cadit*. Other citations of 1 Cor 13:8 are found in *Comm. in Cant.* 3,7,27: *viderat eminere et praeexcellere gratiam caritatis, et ipsam didicerat maiorem omnium solamque esse caritatem quae numquam cadit*; *Hom. in Num.* 9,4; 14,4; *Hom. in Lev.* 12,2; 15,3; *Comm. in Matth. Ser.* 114.

<sup>454</sup> Cf. prol. 2,17: *amore* [...] *caelesti agitur anima, cum perspecta pulchritudine et decore Verbi Dei speciem eius adamaverit, et ex ipso telum quoddam et vulnus amoris acceperit*. The soul's, or the church's, salvific love of the Logos is in the focus of the commentary from its very opening: Solomon *epithalamium cecinit instar nubentis sponsae et erga sponsum suum, qui est Sermo Dei, caelesti amore flagrantis*. Adamavit enim eum sive anima [...] sive ecclesia (prol. 1,1).

To the implicit objection that love could not impede Satan's fall, or Adam's, Origen replies that this fall took place, not in apokatastasis, but *before* the manifestation of Christ's love: *uel ille qui Lucifer fuit et in caelo oriebatur uel ille qui immaculatus erat a natiuitate sua et cum cherubin positus labi potuit antequam erga beneficia Filii Dei caritatis uinculis stringeretur* (ibid. 5,10,227–230). This is also one of the reasons why Origen thought that the end would be even better than the beginning. For in the end the *logika* will adhere to God not as a datum, but voluntarily, after rejecting and defeating evil, in a love striving that has no end and that will prevent any further fall. Indeed, it is love (ἀγάπη) that prevented the *logikon* of Christ to fall—unlike the others—and united it to God so perfectly that the Good has become its nature (*Princ.* 2,6,5). It is again out of love that some *logika*, who have not merited to descend onto earth, descend voluntarily to assist in the process of salvation (*Comm. in Io.* 2,31,187–188; *Princ.* 2,9,7), an idea that interestingly will return in Iamblichus.<sup>455</sup>

And love in the end will prevent falls. The above-quoted passage from the Commentary on Romans is not the only one in which Origen states that, after the realisation of apokatastasis, rational creatures will not fall again. Another is, for instance, *Princ.* 3,6,6, where Origen claims that, after their purification, rational creatures “will remain always and immutably” in that blessed state, thanks to God's will. Origen has again recourse to St. Paul to support his claim (2 Cor 5:1). Scholars suspect that this detail, “always and immutably,” is an addition by Rufinus because it contradicts *Princ.* 3,3,3:<sup>456</sup> “There can be no doubt that after a certain interval of time matter will exist again, and bodies will be created, etc.” But the latter passage comes from a hostile source such as the late Jerome. What is more, it is not at all clear that it refers to a new fall after apokatastasis; it rather refers to a new aeon *prior* to apokatastasis.<sup>457</sup> Besides, if it really referred to a new fall after apokatastasis,

<sup>455</sup> Iamblichus, who knew and cited Origen, in *De an.* 29 (Finamore–Dillon) explains that some souls do not descend into the material realm as a consequence of sins they must expiate, but they descend even if they are “immaculate,” for the sake of salvation, purification, and perfection of this realm: “The soul that descends for the salvation, purification, and perfection [ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ καὶ καθάρσει καὶ τελειότητι] of this realm is immaculate [ἄχραντος] in its descent.” See Ramelli, “Origen, Patristic Philosophy.” For further striking parallels between Origen's and Iamblichus's thought see Ead., review of J. Dillon–W. Polleichtner, *Iamblichus of Chalcis. The Letters* (Atlanta, 2009), RBL 2011 ([www.bookreviews.org/pdf/7338\\_7994.pdf](http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/7338_7994.pdf)).

<sup>456</sup> E.g. M. Simonetti, *Origene. I Principi* (Turin, 1968), 475. CC 7,46, also invoked by Simonetti, does not refer to the final apokatastasis; therefore, the fall that is mentioned therein cannot be understood as a new fall after apokatastasis.

<sup>457</sup> Jerome in *Ep.* 124,10 speaks of new material creations and new possibilities of a fall;



it would be plainly incompatible not only with *Princ.* 3,3,6, but also with *Comm. in Rom.* 5,10,195–230, which I have analysed, and which cannot be an insertion of Rufinus. For it is a very long, coherent, and articulated argument, based on Scriptural support, all aiming at demonstrating that, since love never falls, the perfect attainment of love in apokatastasis will prevent any further falls. The eternity of beatitude in apokatastasis as a result of liberation from evil is alluded to even in a homily: *neque vero putandum est finem esse beatitudinis, si a malis liberemur: initium felicitatis est carere peccato* (*Hom. in Ez.* 1,12).

Neither does Origen maintain that there will be a new fall after apokatastasis in his polemic with the Middle Platonist Celsus<sup>458</sup> in *CC* 8,72. He is speaking of Christ-Logos as a doctor of souls, since “the Logos is more powerful than any illness/evil of the soul.” And it will operate for the sake of the attainment of the end of all. But “the end and perfection of all things is the total elimination of evil.” After which, Origen explains that he has no room in this particular passage to discuss whether a soul can fall again after apokatastasis or not (πότερον ἢ μή). Origen is very far from asserting that souls *will* fall again after apokatastasis here, and in his Commentary on Romans he argues extensively *against* this. Therefore, to Origen’s mind, whereas at every aeon there is the possibility of a new fall, in the end, in the perfect love that will characterise apokatastasis, there will be no possibility of any fall left. The stability of all rational creatures in the Good in the

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this refers to the succession of aeons, which depends on the movements of will of rational creatures, and not to a new fall after apokatastasis: “Undoubtedly, after a certain time matter will exist again, bodies will be created again and the variety of the world will be arranged, on account of the various wills of rational creatures, who, after attaining perfect beatitude, at the end of an aeon, will have descended again little by little and have received so much evilness as to be transformed into hostile powers, because they will not have wanted to preserve their initial condition and keep possession of an incorrupt beatitude. And we must not ignore that many rational creatures will maintain their initial condition until the *second, third, or fourth aeon*, without undergoing any mutation; others will lose so little of their original condition that they will seem to have lost quite nothing; yet others will ruinously fall into the deepest abyss. God, who orders everything, whenever he creates a new aeon, can order each being according to *its merits, the opportunities and causes due to which the ordering of that specific aeon had a beginning and subsists*. Therefore, the one who will have surpassed everyone in evilness and made himself utterly equal to the earth, in the aeon that will be created immediately afterwards will become *the devil*, that is to say, the principle of the material creation of the Lord.” From this it is also crystal clear that the structure of each aeon depends on rational creatures’ moral choices and advancement.

<sup>458</sup> On this debate I limit myself to referring to K. Pietzner, *Ungebildete Konkurrenten? Heidnische und christliche Intellektuelle in vorkonstantinischer Zeit* (Tübingen, 2011); my “The Philosophical Stance.”

eventual apokatastasis is affirmed by Origen in other passages as well, including important ones preserved directly in Greek.<sup>459</sup> Since this stability is guaranteed by the ardent love that will link all *logika* to God, it clearly likens all *logika*, at that final stage, to the *logikon* that is Christ, who since the beginning has become immutable in the Good, i.e. God, just due to its ardent love:

That soul which, like iron on fire, always stays in the Logos, always in Wisdom, always in God, well, all that it does, feels, and understands is God. Therefore, we cannot describe as *liable to change and alteration* the soul that, continuously *inflamed* by the union with the divine Logos, has come to possess *immutability*. (Princ. 2,6,6)

That ultimate apokatastasis and salvation depends on love is clearly expressed also in *Princ.* 3,2,5, in which Origen, in reference to the hostile powers that work for the perdition of humans, opposes to these God's love, from which not even death or the devil will be able to separate human beings (Rom 8:38f.): "Nobody could ever sustain the whole mass of the opposite powers without ruining, unless in this person there is active the power of the one who said, 'You have faith: I have defeated the world' [John 16:33]. Thanks to this force—certainly not human—which operated and spoke in him, Paul said: 'I am certain that neither death nor life, nor angels or governors or powers, nor present or future things [...] nor being on high or in the depths, not any other creature will be able to *separate us from the love of God*, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.'"

In *Princ.* 3,6,3, too, which I have already quoted, Origen rules out again every possibility of a new fall in the final apokatastasis: "One who is found in the Good eternally and for whom God is 'all things' does no longer desire to eat (the fruit) of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and evil," since this *logikon* will be entirely in the Good, tied to it by the bond of love, and will not want to choose evil any more. The same is repeated in *Comm. in Cant.* 1 (GCS VIII 103), where the role of the bonds of love and unity (on the basis of John 17) is emphasised: "If the girls [*sc.* the *logika*] will reach Christ's true being, which is incomprehensible and ineffable, they will no longer walk, nor run, but they will be, in a way, *tied by the bonds of Christ's love*; they will *adhere to it* and will have no longer the force to move again, because they will be *one and the same spirit with Christ*, and in them the saying will be fulfilled, 'Just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, and we are One, so may

<sup>459</sup> *Comm. in Io.* 10,42,26; *Comm. in Matt.* 12,34; *Hom. in Reg.* 1,4; *Dial. Her.* 26.

also they be one in Us.”<sup>460</sup> In accord with the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition, unity is deemed a mark of perfection,<sup>461</sup> but the Biblical basis in John 17 is what Origen adduces. The *telos*, to be perfect, must contemplate unity. Indeed, in *Fr. in Ier.* 28, the τέλος is identified with ἐνότης.<sup>462</sup> Multiplicity and variety arose in the world with the fall of the *logika*, when their wills, at first uniformly oriented toward God-the Good, began to be dispersed in a plurality of acts and objects of volition.<sup>463</sup> This emerges, for instance, from Origen’s “zetetic” prelude in *Princ.* 2,3,1: “It remains to be examined whether before the present world there was another, and, if there was one, whether it was like the present one, or somewhat different, or inferior, or else whether there was absolutely no world, but rather a state such as we think there will be at the end of all, when the Kingdom will be handed on to God the Father [1 Cor 15:28] [...] The present world began when the various falls of the intellectual natures induced God to make this world variegated and diverse [*ad istam uariam diuersamque mundi conditionem*].”<sup>464</sup> But at the end of all

<sup>460</sup> On this work, in which apokatastasis is strongly marked by love and unity, see my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, Integrative Essay 2; R.A. Layton, “Hearing Love’s Language: The Letter of the Text in Origen’s Commentary on the Song of Songs,” in *Reception and Interpretation*, Ch. 13. Origen commented on the Song of Songs thrice: in the commentary, in two homilies, and in a “small tome” mentioned in *Philoc.* 7,1.

<sup>461</sup> See also *De or.* 21,2; *Hom. in Reg.* 1,4. This holds true for Origen not only at the eschatological level, but also at the psychological one: in *Princ.* 2,10,5 he sees disharmony and dispersion in one’s soul, i.e. a state of sin, as punishment to itself: “once the soul is found out of its order [...] it will be unable to be in harmony with itself in the connection of rational movements. Then, we must think that it will suffer the torment of its own laceration and the agony of its own disorder and dissolubility.” Fire will remedy this condition, with a view to the return to the ideal state of unity: “if the soul’s laceration and dispersion will be tested by fire, the soul will undoubtedly be consolidated in a renovation and stronger connexion.” Origen developed the Platonic theme of justice as the harmony of the soul’s faculties and the Stoic theme of harmony in one’s deeds in life, which had been taken over by Philo, *Deus inm.* 24. That sin is punishment to itself is a concept that is dear to Origen; he expresses it, e.g., in *Hom. in Ez.* 3,7, where his concern for theodicy is also apparent: *Poenam cogitationum suarum posuit in corde suo* [...] *Nemo nostrum existimet cruciatus nobis ab alio quam a nobis irrogari. Deus non facit poenas, sed ea quae patimur ipsi nobis praeparamus. Itaque testimonio quo frequenter uti sumus etiam nunc opportune utemur: “Ambulate in lumine ignis vestri et in flamma quam accendistis.”* [Isa 50:11] *Non est ignis alterius nisi vester, qui ligna, qui stipulam, qui materiam futuro incendio coacervastis* [1 Cor 3:12].

<sup>462</sup> See my “Harmony between *Arkhē* and *Telos*” and *John 13–17*, forthcoming in NTP. On unity as perfection attestations range from Plato to Middle and Neoplatonism, including Jewish and Christian Platonism: e.g. Plato *Resp.* 410CD; 443D; 591D; *Dox. Gr.* 387; 651; SVF 3,121; Philo *LA* 1,23, 72; Clement *Strom.* 4,4,18; Alcinous *Didasc.* 29,3, 182 Hermann.

<sup>463</sup> See my “Harmony between *Arkhē* and *Telos*.”

<sup>464</sup> Parallels in Jerome *Ep. ad Avit.* 5 (basically accurate) and Theophilus *ap. Jerome Ep.* 96 (heavily distorted).

unity shall prevail again, first of all as a unity of wills. This is why Origen connects the *telos*, as expressed in 1Cor 15:28, with peace, performed by Christ (*Comm. in Cant.* prol. 4,20).<sup>465</sup>

The core role of love and unity in achieving and maintaining the perfection of apokatastasis is not at all incompatible with the equally core role of intellectual illumination and moral purification to this end. Indeed, immediately after the passage quoted from *Comm. in Cant.* 1, Origen explains:

That this may happen and the creatures may incessantly and indissolubly adhere to the One who Is, Wisdom must necessarily *instruct* them on this point and bring them to perfection, incessantly confirming and *sanctifying* them by means of the Holy Spirit, because only in this way can they understand God.

Christ, whose first *epinoia* is Wisdom and whose second is Logos, instructs rational creatures in order to have them adhere to the Good (*Princ.* 1,6,3); his teaching can illuminate and purify even demons.<sup>466</sup> The result of this illumination and ascent, helped by the whole Trinity, is a condition of perfection which, however, is not static, but anticipates aspects of Gregory of Nyssa's notion of *epektasis*.<sup>467</sup> For the enjoyment of the Good, who is God, does not generate satiety, but rather a stronger and stronger desire for it, and a greater and greater capacity to adhere to it. In *Comm. in Cant.* 3,6,9 Origen is clear that *innovatur semper agnitio secretorum arcanorumque revelatio per sapientiam Dei, non solum hominibus sed et angelis caelestibusque virtutibus*.

In this perspective, Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis, far from contradicting individual free will and responsibility, is entirely grounded in it; indeed, I have argued elsewhere that Origen elaborated and refined his doctrine of apokatastasis precisely on the basis of his anti-"Gnostic" polemic.<sup>468</sup> This is clear from many passages, and emblematically from *Princ.* 3, which begins with a defence of free will against "Gnostic" determinism, in the framework of a concern for theodicy and the union of justice and goodness in God (an anti-Marcionite point which Origen emphasises

<sup>465</sup> *Cum vero ad perfectionem omnium ventum fuerit et sponsa ei perfecta—omnis dumtaxat rationalis creatura—iungetur, quia pacificavit per sanguinem suum non solum quae in terris sunt, sed et quae in caelis, tunc Solomon tantummodo dicitur, cum tradiderit regnum Deo et Patri [...] et ita pacificatis omnibus Patrique subiectis, cum erit iam Deus omnia in omnibus, Solomon tantummodo, id est solum Pacificus, nominabitur.* See also *Fr. in Luc.* 164 on Luke 10:22: Christ "has not yet pacified everything, as is clear from the fact that war is still being waged on the part of evil. But there will be *perfect peace*, in perfection."

<sup>466</sup> Cf. *Comm. in Io.* 20,24(16); 33(27); *De or.* 25,1; *Mart.* 39.

<sup>467</sup> Full demonstration in my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, first Essay.

<sup>468</sup> See my "La coerenza."

everywhere<sup>469</sup>), and ends with apokatastasis. It explains how God created, not evil or death, but *logika* endowed with freewill, which brought about evil and death and a distinction of the *logika* themselves into angels, humans, and demons.<sup>470</sup> God's providence, which never abandons its fallen creatures, but leads them to apokatastasis, does not erase each one's free will, but on the contrary it respects it and the times necessary to each *logikon* to attain purification and adhere to the Good: "God's providence takes care of all *respecting the choices* of each human being's free will" (CC 5,21).<sup>471</sup> Origen develops the very same concept in a more articulated manner in *Princ.* 2,9,7, where again, as ever, his concern for theodicy is paramount.<sup>472</sup> The whole of his philosophy of history and apokatastasis doctrine is informed by his concern for theodicy. Historically, once Origen's theodicy was rejected, unless

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<sup>469</sup> Not only in Περὶ Ἀρχῶν or the great commentaries, but often also in homilies, e.g. those on Jeremiah or Ezechiel. E.g.: *Semper talis est Deus, excruciat nocentes, sed quasi pius pater tormentis clementiam sociat* [...] *Deus flagellat quasi pater, parcit autem non solum Israhel, verum et Aegyptiis, cum alieni sint ab eo, propter propriam mansuetudinem* [...] *Non esse immoderatam iram quae ab haereticis in Creatore reprehenditur* (Hom. in Ez. 1,1); *Ne forte aliquis arbitretur peccatores a Deo traditos ab eo ulterius non gubernari et semel in captivitatem redactos ultra dispensationem eius et misericordiam non mereri* (ibid. 1,2). As Clement already maintained, God's providential economy operates even in hell. *Deum non tantummodo punire peccantes, verum et misericordiam miscere suppliciis* (ibid.); "Consider the goodness and the sharp severity of God [Rom 11:22]. Indeed, it is not the case that God is only good without being sharp, nor that God is only sharp without being good. For if he were good without being sharp, we would despise more his goodness; and if he were only sharp without being good, we would probably despair of our sins [...] God is both good [χρηστός] and sharp [ἀπότομος]" (Hom. in Ier. 4,4).

<sup>470</sup> This scheme is summarised by Origen also in other passages, including some of simpler works such as his homilies: *Fuit quippe Adam in paradiso, sed serpens captivitatis eius causa exstitit* [...] *Serpens hostis est contrarius veritati. Contrarius autem non a principio creatus est* [...] *postea corruens ob peccata* [...] *Deus quippe mortem non fecit* [Wis 1:13] *nec malitiam operatus est. Liberum arbitrium et homini et angelo ad universa permisit. Hic iam intelligendum est quomodo per arbitrii libertatem alii ad bonorum conscenderint summitatem, alii corruperint in malitiae profundum* (Hom. in Ez. 1,3).

<sup>471</sup> See Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology*, 281.

<sup>472</sup> Origen is interpreting Rom 9:14 on Jacob and Esau ("Is God unjust? Of course not!"): "I think this must be applied to all other creatures as well, since, as I have already said, *the Creator's justice* must be evident in all. And it seems to me that this justice will be more clearly manifest if we say that every one of the heavenly, earthly, and infernal beings has in itself the causes of this diversity even before its corporeal birth. For everything has been created by God's Logos and Wisdom and has been ordered by God's justice. *God takes providential care of all with mercy, and exhorts and pushes all to salvation* by means of remedies from which *each one can profit* [...] God, pre-ordering everything with Wisdom up to the tiniest details, and distinguishing everything with judgment, with a most just retribution has disposed everything so that *every creature may be taken care of and helped in relation to its merit* [...] The precise amount of each one's merits is known with exactitude to God alone."

one embraced the “Gnostic” systems that Origen himself countered, or later the Manichaean theodicy (which was fought by Diodore of Tarsus and the young Augustine by means of Origen’s own anti-dualistic arguments<sup>473</sup>), it was difficult to find another. Either Pelagianism or Augustinism would remain. Whether their theodicies were more convincing or “orthodox” than Origen’s needs not detain us here.

The remedies applied by God’s providence are many, more or less drastic, and are used in the most appropriate times and ways. The example of Pharaoh is particularly relevant: the hardening of his heart, far from aiming at his perdition, is a merciful, providential move, because he was not yet ready to receive his correction and needed more time. And over more aeons God has “an indefinite time” for the correction of sinners, because the *logika* are incorruptible (*Princ.* 3,1,12–13). In §17 Origen can thus exalt “God’s multiform providence, which takes care of the immortal soul, because human salvific economy is not closed in the limits of this earthly life, but anterior merits always cause the subsequent condition, and thus under the immortal, eternal and just guide of divine providence *the immortal soul is brought to supreme perfection.*” Likewise in *De or.* 27,15 Origen is clear: “The present aeon is the consummation of many past aeons, as though it were a year of aeons, and after this there will come future aeons, whose beginning is the next one, and in these future aeons God will show *the richness of his grace in goodness.* Even in the case of *the worst sinner*, who has blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, possessed by sin in the whole of the present aeon and in the future from the beginning to the end, after this, in some way I do not know, God will take *providential care of him.*” With the death of the mortal body, nothing is lost in view of the eternal salvation of a *logikon*. This perspective—taken over by Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, and others—is very different from that of the late Augustine, for instance, and other supporters of the eternity of hell. Far from envisaging an eternity of retributive punishment, Origen thinks of an indefinitely long correction and instruction (the extreme case is Satan’s, who will convert in the very *telos*<sup>474</sup>), before the eternity of apokatastasis.

<sup>473</sup> See below the sections devoted to Diodore and Augustine.

<sup>474</sup> Another, if less extreme, case is that of those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit; for this sin in Mark 3:29 it is said that there is no remission “in the aeon,” which Origen interprets as “this aeon, but not the next”: “Even the worst sinner, who has blasphemed the Holy Spirit and has been governed by sin *from the beginning to the end of this whole aeon*, will be brought to order subsequently, *in the aeon to come*, in some way I do not know” (*De or.* 27,15).

Apokatastasis, as is clear from some passages cited and many others, depends on illumination and instruction, which goes hand in hand with correction. This is fully consistent with Origen's ethical intellectualism, a Platonic-Socratic and Stoic heritage that is found in other Fathers as well, such as Gregory of Nyssa, as I shall show. How one behaves depends on what one knows and how one thinks and regards reality; will depends on the intellect and is not an autonomous force.<sup>475</sup> As a consequence, evil is never chosen *qua* evil, but because it is mistaken for a good, out of an error of judgment, due to insufficient knowledge and/or obnubilation (e.g., *Hom. 1 in Ps. 37,4: Recte autem hic peccatum insipientiam nominavit; Hom. in Ez. 9,1: male enim credit quicumque peccat*). Hence the importance of instruction. If one's intellect is illuminated, and achieves the knowledge of the Good, one will certainly adhere to the Good. Apokatastasis itself, at the end of Book 2 of *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, is described as an illumination and a direct vision of the truth, as opposed to the mere "shadows" that the *logika* knew beforehand (Origen is reminiscent not only of Plato's Cave myth, but also of 1 Tim 2:4–6, that God wants all humans to reach the knowledge of the truth, and of 1 Cor 13:12 on eventually knowing God "face to face"). Only with full knowledge is choice really free, and a choice done with full knowledge is a choice for the Good. A choice for evil is not really free: it results from obnubilation, ignorance, and passion. This is why Origen was convinced that divine providence will bring all *logika* to salvation by means of education and rational persuasion, instruction and illumination—or fear of punishments, but only initially, when reason is not yet developed, and not by means of compulsion, since the adhesion to the Good must be free, and to be free it must rest on a purified intellectual sight.<sup>476</sup>

<sup>475</sup> M. Perkams, "Ethischer Intellektualismus und Willensbegriff. Handlungstheorie beim griechischen und lateinischen Origenes," in *Wille und Handlung in der Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und Spätantike*, eds. J. Müller–R. Hofmeister Pich (Berlin, 2010), 239–258, is right that the notion of θέλειν in Origen is intellectualistic. Rufinus's rendering (especially in *Comm. in Rom.*) *uoluntas* may suggest an ethical voluntarism that Origen was far from embracing. The term βούλησις, too, e.g. in *Princ.* 1,2,5–6, indicates a faculty of the rational soul.

<sup>476</sup> The adherence of all creatures to the Good "will be realised in various ways, norms, and times; that is, all the world will submit to the Father, *not by violence or necessity* that compels to subjection, but by means of *word, reason, teaching, imitation of the best, good norms*, and even *threats, when they are appropriate*, in the case of those who *neglect to take care* of their own utility and salvation" (*Princ.* 3,5,8). That threats of αἰώνιος punishment are helpful for those immature who abstain from evil out of fear and not for love is repeated, e.g., in CC 6,26: "it is not helpful to go up to what will come *beyond that punishment*, for the sake of those who restrain themselves only with much difficulty, *out of fear* of the αἰώνιος punishment"; *Hom. in Jer. 20(19),4*: for a married woman it is better to believe that a faithless woman will undergo αἰώνιος punishment and keep faithful, rather than knowing the truth and becoming

This is why for Origen divine providence will lead all to salvation, but respecting each one's free will; each *logikon* will freely adhere to God, and to do so each will need its own times, according to its choices and development, so that both divine justice first and then divine grace are saved (as Origen makes clear commenting on 1Cor 3:15 on those who are saved through fire).<sup>477</sup>

How God *providentially takes care of everyone, respecting all rational creatures' free will*, that is to say, whom God's Logos finds already prepared and capable and thus instructs, whom it postpones for a while, from whom it completely hides without listening to their voice, whom it pushes to salvation by means of corrections and punishments, because they overlooked God's Word/Logos, albeit it was announced and predicated, *almost demanding* their conversion and obtaining it by force, to whom it offers occasions for salvation, so that one *can attain it most certainly*, manifesting one's faith even just with one word—well, for what reasons and on what occasions all of this takes place [...] it is known to God, and God's Only Begotten, through whom *all beings* have been created and *are restored*, and by whom all beings are sanctified.

(*Princ.* 3,5,8)

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disloyal; *Hom. in Gen.* 7,4: some adhere to the Good out of love and freedom (in Paul's words, as "children of Sarah"); others do so out of fear and without freedom ("children of Hagar"). See *CC* 4,10; 5,15. God's wrath is presented as educative punishment in *Comm. in Io.* 6,58; *Hom. in Ez.* 1,2; *CC* 4,72; *Hom. in Ier.* 19,1; *Comm. in Matt.* 15,1. A counterexample is given by Tertullian, a contemporary of Origen, who based his ethics on fear rather than love, viewed God's punishments as retributive rather than healing (*Adv. Marc.* 1,26–27), and coherently upheld an eschatology that is different from Origen's. C. Rambaux, *Tertullien face aux Morales des trois premiers siècles* (Paris, 1979) observes that Tertullian transformed Deut 13:4 into: *Temptat vos dominus deus vester, an ex toto corde vestro et ex tota anima vestra timeatis deum* (*Scorp.* 2,8), replacing "to love" with "to fear." On Tertullian's soteriology and its anthropological foundation see M. Steenberg, "Impatience and Humanity's Sinful State in Tertullian," *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008) 107–132. Tertullian's anthropology is also different from Origen's, e.g. in the soul's materiality: P. Kitzler, "*Nihil enim anima si non corpus*," *Wiener Studien* 122 (2009) 145–169. Cf. F. Chapot, *Virtus veritatis* (Turnhout, 2009) on his philosophical background.

<sup>477</sup> *Hom. in Jer.* 16,5: "If we leave this life with both sins and good deeds, shall we be saved on account of the good deeds and absolved for the sins that we committed voluntarily? Or shall we be punished for the sins without receiving a reward for the good deeds? [...] *Neither the former nor the latter case becomes God's justice.* For God, who is just, wants to destroy and eliminate sin. [...] Suppose that you built up your house with gold, silver, and precious stones, but also wood and straw: What will happen to you after death? Do you want to enter the holy places with wood and straw, so to contaminate God's Kingdom? Or stay in fire because of your straw and wood, and receive no reward for your gold, silver, and precious stones? This would not be sensible either. Then how should we solve this problem? The solution is that because of your wood you will *first* receive the fire that devours wood and straw"; *then*, after purification, one will receive the reward for one's good deed, and beyond these. As is evident, Origen's concern for theodicy is always paramount. Cf. *Comm. in Io.* 32,3, partially quoted above: "The Father has handed *all* to Christ, and in Christ *all will be vivified*; at the same time, *God's justice and the treatment of each one according to one's merits will not fail to be fulfilled.*"



Origen admits of a tension between the *logika's* free will and God's will during history (*Hom. in Gen.* 3,2: "Many things happen without God's will, but nothing without God's providence"), but not in the end, when God's will shall unfailingly be fulfilled. And the object of this will is revealed by 1Tim 2:4–6: "God wants *all human beings* to be saved and to attain the knowledge of the truth" (the same is asserted in 1Tim 1:15 which Origen quotes in *Comm. in Cant.* 2,6,11: *Christus in hunc mundum venit peccatores salvos facere*). The realisation of God's will in the end will not annihilate the *logika's* free will, exactly because their will shall be then completely free, thanks to their achieved complete knowledge (note again Origen's ethical intellectualism): once all have come to know the Good, in the end, all will certainly adhere to it, and this adhesion will be absolutely free and voluntary. That providence leads each *logikon* to salvation, all the way respecting its free will, is hammered home also in *Princ.* 2,1,2,<sup>478</sup> 3,5,5, 1,8,3<sup>479</sup> and elsewhere until a later work such as the *Commentary on Matthew*.<sup>480</sup> For Origen, the reconciliation between providence (and its outcome, apokatastasis) and free will is a weighty philosophical issue; at the same time he is also aware of

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<sup>478</sup> Providence's task is that "the variety of the intellectual creatures may tend to *one end of perfection* [...] God, the Father of all, for the sake of the *salvation of all of his creatures* [*pro salute universarum creaturarum suarum*], by means of his ineffable Wisdom and Logos has providentially disposed everything in such a way that none of the spirits or souls, or however these rational individual substances [*rationabiles subsistentiae* = λογικαὶ ὑποστάσεις] must be called, is *forced against its will* [*contra arbitrii libertatem vi cogereantur*] to behave in a way that is different from its inclination, otherwise *free will* [*liberi facultas arbitrii*] *would be stolen from them and their nature would be modified*." Free will is not renounceable, being part of the *logika's* nature, an essential quality of intellectual substances, as hot, cold, dry and humid are of material ones (ibid. 2,1,4).

<sup>479</sup> While God possesses all virtues in a substantial way, the *logika* possess them in an accidental way, "insofar as it depends on us, our zeal, and our deserts, to become wise by devoting ourselves to wisdom [...]. Indeed, God's goodness pushes all in proportion to how much each one is worthy of it, and attracts all to the blessed *telos*."

<sup>480</sup> It was dictated in 248–249 CE according to P. Nautin, *Origène. Sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris, 1977), 375 ff. In 10,3 Origen comments on Matt 13:43: "then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." He compares this with Dan 12:3 and 1Cor 15:41–42, on the different splendour of heavenly bodies in relation to the multitude of the just: why is it that Daniel and Paul speak of different degrees of splendour, whereas Jesus seems to state the opposite? Origen solves the problem by having recourse to the notion of the rational creatures' progress toward God. This is what Paul and Daniel refer to. But Jesus refers to the *telos* of all, when all, purified and instructed, will be perfect and shine like the sun. Origen quotes Matt 5:16, "may your light shine before humans," interpreting this light at three different stages: first the light of Jesus's disciples before humans; then their light between death and the final resurrection, and finally after the resurrection, when all together they will make up the "perfect human" (Eph 4:13) and shine like one sun.

the divine mystery: thus, he is certain that these two poles are in harmony, but God only knows how this reconciliation takes place in each single case.<sup>481</sup> And the gravity of sin is emphatically denounced by Origen in many passages, as by Macrina and Gregory of Nyssa (their belief in apokatastasis was far from allowing for moral looseness).<sup>482</sup> But precisely the illumination of the intellect (a process that will be performed by angels and Christ-Logos, and in which the saints too will participate: *Princ.* 2,11,6) will eventually orient all wills toward the Good.

On this process Origen concentrates in *Princ.* 2,11. He first blames those who interpret God's promises too literally, as though they were material pleasures, without considering that after the resurrection bodies will be spiritual (1 Cor 15:44). God's promises must be understood spiritually: the food promised will be intellectual nourishment, by which "the soul is entirely restored to God's image and likeness, as the human being was created in the beginning" (§ 2–3).<sup>483</sup> Thus, a man who has good deeds, but is ignorant, will be instructed in the heavenly Jerusalem. The task of instruction will be performed by angels (§ 3), because desire for knowledge—"to learn the rationale [*ratio* = λόγος] of the things that we see made by God"—is innate in human souls, having been infused by God, and consequently it will not be frustrated forever (§ 4).<sup>484</sup> Those who already in this life have devoted themselves to the study of divine things and the quest for truth, are better prepared to receive the future instruction; "perhaps for this reason it is said that those who have will be given in addition [Matt 25:29], that we may know that those who already in this life possess some degree of truth and knowledge, in the future life will receive in addition the beauty of the

<sup>481</sup> Divine Providence takes care of everyone, including the tiniest ones, and in every minuscule detail (it is *minutissima et subtilissima*: *Hom. in Lev.* 9,8), but how this specifically can be reconciled with human free will is a mystery: "God providentially takes care of everything [*προνοεῖ καὶ μέλει*] and nothing happens without a reason and accidentally [*ἀπλῶς καὶ εἰς ἧ*], but God's salvific economy is impossible to know even through hints [*ἀτέκμαρτος καὶ ἄγνωστος*]" (*Hom. in Iob* cat. p. 375).

<sup>482</sup> Just an instance: like Gregory, who expressed this idea especially in his *De infantibus*, Origen was convinced that it is much better to die as a baby, in innocence, than to die later but covered in sins: *auferantur filii, dum adhuc pueri sunt, et in rudibus annis positi nondum gravioribus peccatorum sordibus maculati sunt* (*Hom. 2 in Ps.* 37,5).

<sup>483</sup> Origen here—differently from what he does esp. in *Princ.* 3,6,1—overlooks his distinction between image and likeness in reference to Gen 1:26; the same is the case in *Hom. in Gen.* 1,13; *Hom. in Luc.* 39,5; *Comm. in Io.* 2,23(17); *Sel. in Ps.* 4,3, PG 12,1140.

<sup>484</sup> See also *Princ.* 1,1,7; that the *logika's* tending to God as their natural end cannot be eternally frustrated is an idea that was dear to Origen. See also *Princ.* 4,4,10; *Comm. in Io.* 20,22,(20); *Exh. ad mart.* 47; *Hom. in Gen.* 13,4; *Hom. in Num.* 17,4.

perfect image" (ibid.).<sup>485</sup> This otherworldly intellectual growth will include the full understanding of the spiritual meanings of Scripture, the rationale of reality, the reason of the fallen angels' apostasy, and the judgment of divine providence on each being (§ 5). This long process of learning will take place first in paradise (Eden, a "school of souls"), and thence in an ascent through the heavenly spheres—which Origen identifies with the "heavens" of which Scripture speaks—to the Kingdom of Heavens (§ 6), a Christian reading of a Neoplatonic and late-antique itinerary.<sup>486</sup> The blessed will come to know the nature of the heavenly bodies and all the other creatures of God, who will reveal to them, as to children, "the causes of realities and the meaning of God's creation," both the visible and the invisible one (§ 7):

Thus, the rational nature grows gradually [...] the mind, *empowered in intelligence and sensitivity, and brought to perfection*, attains perfect knowledge, no longer hindered by the fleshly senses,<sup>487</sup> but rather boosted by the intellectual senses, contemplating the causes of things clearly and, so to say, face to face [1 Cor 13:12]. In this way it attains perfection, first that thanks to which it reaches such a condition, then that by which it remains in it, having as its own food *knowledge and understanding of the beings and their causes* [...] the mind too, once perfected, continues to feed on suitable foods in the right measure [...] We believe that this food is for all the *contemplation and knowledge of God*, to the extent that it becomes a created nature.<sup>488</sup> (ibid.)

Origen reflects on otherworldly instruction also in *Princ.* 3,6,9, where, against the backdrop of the eventual apokatastasis, the instruction imparted by angels is followed by that imparted by Christ, who will submit to himself, and then to the Father, all beings.<sup>489</sup> Origen here refers to the eschato-

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<sup>485</sup> In *Hom. in Ps.* 36, 5,1, too, Origen remarks that studying in the present life, however little, is useful with a view to the superior knowledge that the blessed will acquire after death. Whatever is not learnt now will have to be learnt then.

<sup>486</sup> For its attestation in Macrobius see, e.g., my "Macrobio allegorista neoplatonico," but it is found also in Numenius fr. 31 Des Places and the *Poimandres* of *Corpus Hermeticum*.

<sup>487</sup> A clear echo from Plato's *Phaedo*.

<sup>488</sup> Origen, like Nyssen, thought that a creature will never be able to fully know the mystery of the uncreated God. See e.g. *Hom. in Is.* 1,2; 4,1; *Princ.* 4,3,14; my "Apofatismo cristiano e relativismo pagano: un confronto tra filosofi platonici," in *Verità e mistero nel pluralismo culturale della tarda antichità*, ed. A.M. Mazzanti (Bologna, 2009), 101–169.

<sup>489</sup> Origen postulates a passage from the tutorship of angels to that of Christ also in the earthly life: beginners are handed to guardian angels, but when they make progress, they are directly entrusted to Christ (e.g., *Comm. in Matt.* 13,26–28; *Hom. in Num.* 24,3). In passages such as these Origen often quotes Gal 4:2; he cites it also in reference to the other world in *Princ.* 3,6,9: "after the tutors and procurators, Christ himself, the universal king, will begin to reign."

logical understanding of Christ as Wisdom, which is superior to that of the incarnated Jesus.<sup>490</sup> Only in the end shall we access full knowledge. In Origen's view the present Scripture does not contain all the mysteries of God and is only "the most elementary and short introduction" to "the totality of knowledge" (τῆς ὅλης γνώσεως, *Comm. in Io.* 13,5,27–30). This is why Origen makes much of the αἰώνιον Gospel (Rev 14:6), the Gospel delivered in the world to come: "If we understand exactly what Moses writes at the beginning of his book, 'in the beginning God created heaven and earth' [Gen 1:1], i.e., that this is the beginning of all the creation [sc. intelligible],<sup>491</sup> it will be necessary to refer back to this principle [ἀρχή] the end [τέλος] of the world, so that that 'heaven' and that 'earth' will be identified with the dwelling place and rest of the saints. Thus, the saints and the meek will be the first to inherit that land, according to the teaching of the Law [Deut 4:38], of the prophets [Ps 36:11], and of the Gospels [Matt 5:4]. In that land, I think, there are the real and living paradigms of those norms which Moses taught by means of the shadow of the Law [...] That land which receives all the saints will first *instruct them with the rules of the true Law, that of the other world*, that they may understand more easily the perfect teachings of heaven, to which nothing can be added. In this will truly consist what is called *αἰώνιον Gospel* and ever new Testament, which will never grow old" (*Princ.* 3,6,7).<sup>492</sup>

Origen's concept of the intellectual development of the *logika* as an essential component of apokatastasis is perfectly consistent with his view of souls as a result of the decadence of intellects and their future return to the level of intellects, as is manifest in *Princ.* 2,8,2 ff. Even here, Origen proceeds on the basis of Scripture, namely 1 Cor 14:15, remarking that Paul associates the νοῦς,

<sup>490</sup> In *Princ.* 1,3,1 Origen distinguishes the knowledge of Christ in his human nature, which was taken up by him, from that of Christ in his divine nature; *ibid.* 1,3,8 Origen speaks of the *logika's* participation in Christ not qua incarnated, but qua Logos; an even superior level seems to be that of the participation in Christ as Wisdom, the first of the Son's *epinoiai* (see also *Comm. in Io.* 1,34[39]; *Hom. in Ier.* 1,8). Participation in Wisdom, Science, and Sanctification enables the attainment of the highest perfection; "in this way, after the purification and elimination of every stain of impurity and ignorance, the rational creature progresses so much in integrity and pureness as to become such as God had given it the possibility of being, worthy of the One who had given it the possibility of being pure and perfect. Thus the creature becomes worthy of its Creator. For an individual who is such as its Creator wanted it to be will learn from God that virtue exists always, and lives forever."

<sup>491</sup> The beginning of the sense-perceptible creation is, according to Origen, in Gen 1:9–10.

<sup>492</sup> On Origen's concept of the αἰώνιον Gospel see my *Gregorio di Nissa*, first Integrative Essay; S. Keough, "The Eternal Gospel: Origen's Eschatological Exegesis," in *Reception and Interpretation*, 193–226.

and not the ψυχῇ, with the Holy Spirit. Origen's hypothesis<sup>493</sup> is that the soul, once purified, will return to being a νοῦς, as it was at the beginning, before cooling down—according to the etymology of ψυχῇ from ψύξις—and losing the fire of the love of God. After returning to the state of intellect, it will enjoy an eternal intellectual and spiritual life. For, “the soul has drawn its name from its cooling down from the ardor of the just and participation in divine fire, but it has not lost the possibility of returning to that condition of heath in which it was initially found [...] the intellect, after falling from its state and dignity, has become, and has been called, soul, but if it will be emended and corrected, it will return to being an intellect” (*Princ.* 2,8,3).<sup>494</sup> This perspective will be embraced by Gregory of Nyssa, who sees the true soul as the rational soul, to which only afterwards, and accidentally, are the inferior components added, as adventitious appendixes doomed to disappear in the *telos*.<sup>495</sup>

This illumination parallels the purification and healing of the *logika* from the illness and dirtiness of the soul, that is, sin. The therapeutic and cathartic function of otherworldly sufferings, already underlined by Clement, was taken over by Origen and emphasised by Gregory Nyssen. Sufferings decreed by God are not merely retributive, but they heal and purify, which entails their limited duration. This principle is ubiquitously put forward by Origen in all genres of his works, from Περὶ ἀρχῶν to his commentaries, from *Contra Celsum* to his homilies, e.g.:<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>493</sup> As often, faithful to his heuristic method, Origen presents what he is expounding “not as a truth of faith, but as an object of examination and discussion” (§ 4), “more as an object of the readers’ investigation than as an exact definition” (§ 5). A specific, separate study will be devoted to Origen’s philosophical “zetetic” method. In the case of the doctrine concerning the soul this method was all the more justified in that—as Origen himself remarked in his preface to Περὶ ἀρχῶν—this subject has been left unclarified by Scripture and the apostolic teaching. Therefore he has recourse to rational investigation, also on the basis of the philosophical tradition *de anima*, not only that of Plato himself but also that of Middle Platonism. One of his very rare references to Plutarch comes precisely in this connection: in CC 5,57 Origen cites his lost work τὰ περὶ ψυχῆς. Origen himself never wrote a Περὶ ψυχῆς.

<sup>494</sup> See also *Princ.* 1,8,4: “transcending not only corporeal nature, but also the ambiguous and frail movements of the soul, they have united themselves with the Lord, becoming again spirits”; *Hom. in Lev.* 9,11; *Comm. in Matt.* 17,30; *Hom. in Ez.* 13,2; *Comm. in Io.* 13,16. Origen found a similar notion already in Clement, *Adumbr. in Iud.* 5,24; *Adumbr. in Eccl.* 57. Clement admitted of the possibility for humans in this life to assume angelic traits: *Paed.* 1,6,36; *Strom.* 6,13,105; 7,14,84. Origen seems close in *Comm. in Io.* 1,2,3; 12,7; 20,29(23); *Hom. in Ier.* 15,6.

<sup>495</sup> Full treatment in my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*.

<sup>496</sup> See e.g. CC 5,31; *Hom. in Ex.* 3,3; 8,5–6; *Hom. in Ier.* 6,2; 12,5; CC 3,75; 4,72.99; 6,56; *Hom. in Num.* 8,1; *Sel. in Ex.* PG 12,276; *Princ.* 1,6,2 (on otherworldly instruction imparted by angels). Against Marcionites and “Gnostics” who could not reconcile justice and goodness in God,

Si non esset *utile conversioni* peccantium adhibere tormenta peccantibus, numquam misericors et benignus Deus poenis scelera puniret. Sed quasi indulgentissimus pater ad hoc corripit filium *ut erudiat* [...] Non tam iram esse iram Dei quam necessariam *dispensationem*. Audi quod sit opus irae Dei: *ut arguat, ut corrigat, ut emendet*. [...] Furorem Dei non esse inutile *ad sanitatem*, sed ad hoc adhiberi ut *curet aegrotantes, ut emendet* [...] Omnia Dei quae videntur amara esse *ad eruditionem et remedia proficiunt*. Bonitas Dei est etiam in his quae amara aestimantur. [...] Tormenta boni Dei sint *ad utilitatem eorum* qui ea sustinent constituta. Ausculta eundem prophetam [Isa 47:14–15] dicentem: ‘Habes carbones ignis: sedebis super eos; hi erunt tibi adiutorio.’ (Hom. in Ez. 1,2–3)

This medical, pedagogical, and cathartic view of punishments is so firmly rooted in Origen’s mind that he considers even the death inflicted after the fall to be a healing and salutary punishment (e.g. *Comm. in Matt.* 15,15; *Hom. in Lev.* 14,4; *De res. ap. Method. De res. ap. Phot. Bibl. cod.* 234: νεκρότητι περιβαλὼν αὐτὸν ὅπως διὰ τῆς λύσεως τοῦ σώματος πᾶν τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ γεννηθὲν κακὸν ἀποθάνη). Origen describes Christ as a physician of souls whose aim is “to heal all rational souls with the therapy that comes from the Logos, to make them

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in *Princ.* 2,5,<sup>1</sup> Origen observes that they are “convinced that the just cannot love the wicked, but is almost dragged by hatred against them” because “they believe that if one is inflicted anything hard and severe, one is not done good.” On the contrary, Origen maintains that God’s punishments are for the sake of sinners: “by punishing those who deserve punishment, does not God *punish them with a view to their own good*? [...] God is holy, good, and just at the same time” (ibid. 3–4). Ch. 5 of Book 2 is devoted to the demonstration that it is impossible to disjoin justice and goodness in God, against “heretics.” In § 2 he argues on the basis of many Scriptural passages, e.g. remarking that, following the train of thought of his adversaries, one will conclude that the OT God was, not only not good, but not even just, since he had someone’s sins fall upon his descendants (cf. Ex 20:5; 34:7). Such OT passages, Origen maintains, must be interpreted allegorically. The problem, for him and his adversaries alike, was theodicy: “If the One whom they call ‘good’ is good with all, surely he is good also with those who will perish. But then, why doesn’t he save them? If he does not want, he will not be good; if he wants but cannot, he will not be omnipotent.” Origen shows that in the NT too, just as in the OT, there are expressions of God’s severity, which contradict the Marcionite claims (e.g. Matt 22:11–14). And in the OT as well there are expressions of God’s goodness; thus, “as in the OT God is often called good, so in the Gospels is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ called just” (§ 4). After the Scriptural proofs, Origen uses philosophical ones to demonstrate that justice and goodness cannot be in conflict, because all virtues are interconnected. This was a Stoic assumption (SVF III 295–304) taken over by Clement (e.g. *Strom.* 4,163,3; 8,30,2). As a consequence, “if goodness [ἀγαθότης] is virtue and justice is virtue, justice identifies itself with goodness.” Origen is convinced that in apokatastasis not only God’s goodness will be manifest, but also God’s justice, with no conflict. Philo often used the term ἀγαθότης and conceived of goodness as a general virtue of which the other virtues are species (*LA* 1,59,63–65). The virtue-goodness identification goes back again to the ancient Stoa (SVF III 70 ff.).

friends of God" (CC 3,54). Christ-Logos-Physician can use even drastic remedies (*poenalibus curis*), such as cauterisation with fire (*ignis supplicium*), but succeeds in healing the sinner (*Princ.* 2,10,6; cf. 2,7,3; 3,1,15<sup>497</sup>). Therefore, in *Princ.* 2,10,6–7 Origen interprets a number of OT passages in this light, to show that "God deals with sinners in the same way as physicians do with the sick to restore them to health." For instance, Ger 25:15 ff. refers to the cup of God's wrath, adding that those who do not drink from it are not purified: "hence it is clear that the rage of God's vengeance *aims at purifying souls*."<sup>498</sup> Even punishment in fire must be understood as a kind of *remedy*," as is demonstrated by Isa 4:4; 47:14–15;<sup>499</sup> 66:16; Mal 3:3.<sup>500</sup> The purifying function of the fire sent by God is clear throughout Origen's work;<sup>501</sup> by way of example

<sup>497</sup> "The divine Logos declares that It will eliminate evilness—called "stony heart"—from those who approach It, not against their will though, but only if the sick come to the Physician. [...] And the action of restoring sight to the blind [Matt 11:5] in respect to the request of those who were confident that they could be healed, is the work of these who obtain to be healed; but in respect to the restoring of sight, it is the work of Our Saviour." See also *Comm. in Io.* 1,20 (22); CC 2,67; 3,62; *Hom. in Lev.* 8,1; in these passages the Physician is Christ; in others, God (*Hom. in Ier.* 12,5; in *Ez.* 1,2). The notion of *Christus medicus* was already developed by Clement, by the author of the *Letter to Diognetus*, 9,6 (identified by some with Pantaeus, well known to Origen: see Th. Baumeister, "Zur Datierung der Schrift an Diognet," *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 [1988] 105–111) and Ignatius of Antioch, also known to Origen (*Hom. in Luc.* 6) in *Eph.* 7,2, where Christ is styled "bodily and spiritual physician."

<sup>498</sup> The same interpretation of the same passage is found in *Comm. in Matt. S.*, 95.

<sup>499</sup> This passage is dear to Origen, who quotes it as an example of the therapeutic function of God's punishments also in *Princ.* 2,5,3; CC 5,5 (where it is joined to Mal 3:2) and 6,56.

<sup>500</sup> The joining of this passage with Isa 4:4 is also found in *De or.* 29,16, again in the interpretation of punishment as purification. Mal 3:3 is cited to the same effect in CC 4,13, 6,44; 8,56. In *Hom. in Ier.* 2,2 the same passage from Isaiah is referred to as an expression of a serious sin which needs punishment in fire in order to be expiated. In *Hom. in Luc.* 14,3, Origen cites it.

<sup>501</sup> E.g. *Hom. in Ex.* 6,3; *Hom. in Lev.* 9,7; 14,3; *Hom. in Luc.* 24; *Hom. in Ier.* 2,3; *Comm. in Matt.* 15,23; *Comm. in Matt. Ser.* 72. In CC 5,1 the purifying fire is assimilated to the fire of the Stoic cosmic conflagration. The existence of otherworldly punishments is affirmed by Origen on the basis of Scripture (e.g. *Princ.* 2,10,1; 1 *praef.* 5), but he interprets them both as spiritual and as not eternal, but proportional to one's sins and one's remorse for these (e.g. *Princ.* 2,10,4; *Hom. in Lev.* 9,8; in *Ez.* 3,7; *Comm. in Rom.* 2,6; *Hom.* 38 in *Ps.* 2,7; 2,2; *Hom. in Ier.* 16,10; *De or.* 28,5). In reference to Matt 25:41 he remarks: "the devil and his angels will be transferred to the αἰώνιον fire when the Lord Jesus Christ will sit as a king and judge and will say to those who will have triumphed over evil earlier or later: 'Come, blessed of my Father, to inherit the Kingdom prepared for you by my Father.' But to the others he will say: 'Go to the αἰώνιον fire prepared by God for the devil and his angels,' until he will take care of every soul with the remedies that he alone knows, and 'all of Israel will be saved' [Rom 11:26]" (*Hom. in Ies. Nav.* 8,5). 1 Cor 3:12 is interpreted in the same cathartic sense in *Princ.* 1,1; CC 5,15 (the αἰώνιον fire burns the "wood, straw, and stubble" of evil in souls); *Hom. in Ex.* 6,3; *Hom. in Lev.* 14,3. It is the "perversity of habits" of each one that alimnts this fire (*Hom. in Ier.* 5,15). The

I quote *Hom. 1 in Ps. 38,7*: *omnibus intra se visceribus inflammatus, velociter consumeret latentes intrinsecus vitiorum sordes, ut posteaquam interemisset omne quidquid carnis et materiae crassioris proprium est et amicum, tunc iam ignis iste fieret in eo lux*. In *Hom. in Ez. 2,1* Origen reflects on the eschatological fire mentioned in 1 Cor 3:12 ff.: *Quis est ignis iste sic sapiens ut custodiat aurum meum [...] ut mala tantum consumat quae feci? [...] Si ignis iste fuerit accensus, malitia consummabitur*. The Godhead itself is a purifying fire for those who need it, and light for those who do not need purification any more: *Lux sine dubio iustis et ignis efficitur peccatoribus, ut consumat in iis omne quod in anima eorum corruptibilitatis et fragilitatis invenerit* (*Comm. in Cant. 2,2,21*). All will have to pass through the purifying fire, and the more one has sinned, the longer one will remain in it:

Dominus [...] pollicetur ut exterminet [...] peccatum, ita ut non iam sit peccator [...] Si in hac vita faciamus in nobis interire peccatum, [...] non indigebimus poenae ignis aeterni [...] si vero contemnimus divinae Scripturae verba [...] manet nos ignis ille qui praeparatus est peccatoribus et veniemus ad illum ignem in quo “uniuscuiusque opus quale sit ignis probabit.” Et, ut ego arbitror, omnes nos venire necesse est ad illum ignem. Etiam si Paulus sit aliquis vel Petrus, venit tamen ad illum ignem. Sed illi tales audiunt: “Etiam si per ignes transeas, flamma non aduret te.” Si vero aliquis similis mei peccator sit, veniet quidem ad ignem illum sicut Petrus et Paulus, sed non sic transiet.

(*Hom. 3 in Ps. 36, 1*)

Clearly, *ignis aeternus* translates *πῦρ αἰώνιον*, which does not mean “eternal,” but “of the world to come.”<sup>502</sup> Indeed, in the passage cited, *Si in hac vita faciamus in nobis interire peccatum, non indigebimus poenae ignis aeterni* means: “If we cause sin to perish in us in the present life, we shall not need

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very identification of otherworldly punishments with sins and passions as punishments to themselves (*Princ. 2,10,5*: *illis ipsis perdurantibus in se noxiis effectibus cruciantur*) is already found in Philo (*Congr. 57*), well known to Origen, and Lucretius *RN 3,978–1023* (on which see J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie* [Paris, 1958], 173–175, D. Konstan, *Lucrezio e la psicologia epicurea*, ed. I. Ramelli [Milan, 2007], Ch. 1; A.M. Lorca, “Lucrezio: una critica ilustrada a la religión popular,” in G. Giannantoni–M. Gigante, eds., *Epicureismo greco e romano* [Naples, 1996], 3: 851–864). A similar interpretation was already given by Epicurus (fr. 341 Us.).

<sup>502</sup> The same is the case in a number of Latin translations from Origen, e.g. in *Comm. in Cant. 3,7,9*: *ex ipsis faucibus aeternae mortis abripiat*; *Hom. in Lev. 14,4*: *aeterni ignes*. Scott, “Guarding the Mysteries,” 351 remarks that in this passage “he takes the *aeterni ignes* of hell for granted on the basis of explicit biblical testimonies and examples.” Of course he does so without problem because what he used in Greek is *αἰώνιος* and not *αἰδῖος*. The same is the case with *Princ. prol. 4*, also reproduced by Pamphilus *Apol. 25*: the phrase *igni aeterno* has *αἰώνιος* behind itself; this is why Origen situates this fire *before* the resurrection, making it clear that it is not eternal.



the punishment of fire in the next." In *Princ.* 2,5,3—which will be taken over almost literally by Gregory of Nyssa in *De anima*—Origen claims that it is not the case that God, "out of hatred for the wicked, returns them evil for evil in retribution," but because these people need drastic therapies, God applies them to heal the wicked. Origen cites yet other Scriptural passages in support of his argument, such as 1Pet 3:18ff.; Isa 47:14–15; Ps 77(78):34, saying about the last one: "Let them listen to what is said about those who died in the desert [...]: 'When He killed them, then they looked for Him.' Scripture does not say that God killed some, and others looked for God, but it says that such was the death of those who were killed that, *after being killed, they looked for God!*" Likewise, Origen interprets Ez 16:55 in reference to the eventual apokatastasis of sinners: "Take Sodom and Gomorrah: God had fire and sulphur rain down upon them. But what does Ezekiel say of them? 'Sodom will be *restored to its ancient state.*'" The very same is remarked in *Hom. in Ez.* 1,2.<sup>503</sup> Origen insists a great deal that in the Bible God first gives death and suffering and then life and joy, and not vice versa, which he interprets in reference to the restoration and in connection with the therapeutic nature of all suffering and death inflicted by God.<sup>504</sup> In *Hom. in Luc.* 17 Origen makes it clear that God's strategy is always 'resurrective': "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many people in Israel.' It is right that I should first fall and then, after falling, *rise again*. If this were not the case, the Saviour would be the cause of an evil fall to me. Instead, he *had me fall* with this purpose: in order for me *to rise again*." Especially in *Hom. in Ier.* 1,15–16, Origen affirms that, if God kills and destroys, it is always and only to remake his creatures better:

<sup>503</sup> "Restituetur Sodoma in antiquum." [Ez 16:55] *Et adhuc dubitas an bonus sit Dominus puniens Sodomitae?* Jerusalem, too, is used as an image of apokatastasis, e.g. in *Hom. in Luc.* 39,3: "once Jerusalem has been rebuilt and *restored to its ancient state.*" The Greek *Vorlage* was a form of the technical expression ἀποκαθίστασθαι εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον.

<sup>504</sup> Cf. *Hom. in Ier.* 1,16; *Comm. in Rom.* 6,22–23: "Sin gives to its soldiers the stipend they deserve: death—not this, which separates the body from the soul, but that for which, due to sin, the soul remains separate from God. But even if it is said that God kills and hands to death, *the death inflicted by God is such as to give life*, because by the One who is Good no evil can be given. However severe the punishment is, it is inflicted *with the intention of healing*"; the Greek fragment from *ibid.* 6,23: "Should someone oppose to this argument God's sentence, 'I shall kill,' I would reply that God has one die to sin *in order to vivify this person who has died to sin.*" See my "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah." The notion that sufferings inflicted by God are healing is a Platonic heritage (see e.g. *Gorg.* 525AD, where Plato also remarks that only suffering can purify souls from ἀδικία; *Resp.* 380BC; *Leg.* 934AB). In Middle Platonism, especially Plutarch took over this idea in *De ser. num. vind.* 4. But, again, Origen found the same idea in the Bible too (e.g. Wis 11–12).

This is why the Word of God necessarily presents, first, the eradication, complete destruction, and elimination, and only after this the edification and new planting. In Scripture we always find cited first the somber aspects, so to say, and then, cited afterwards, those which appear joyful. "I shall kill and then give life." God does not say, "I shall give life" and then "I shall kill," because it is impossible that what God has made live be eliminated by God himself or anyone else. Who is the one whom "I shall kill"? It is Paul the informer, Paul the persecutor, and then "I shall make him live," that he may become Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ [...] Thus, God necessarily begins with bitter words such as "I shall kill," and then, after killing, he says: "I shall give life"; "I shall strike and then heal." The Lord chastises to instruct those whom he loves [...] First he has a person suffer, *then he restores her again*.<sup>505</sup>

The verb used at the end is ἀποκαθίστημι, on whose medical meaning Origen plays to suggest the notion of apokatastasis and the related idea of the therapeutic value of all sufferings decreed by God. In *Hom. in Ier.* 14,18 too, which I have already quoted in the section devoted to the NT, Origen explains the medical meaning of ἀποκαθίστημι and uses it in reference to the eventual apokatastasis. Here, he also reads the announcement of the final apokatastasis in Acts 3:20–22 (as in *Comm. in Matth.* 17,19; cf. *Schol. in Luc.* 14). In Origen's view, OT and NT form a unit, and goodness/mercy and justice in God are not disjoined either (a concept on which Origen insists against Marcionites and "Gnostics"<sup>506</sup>); this is why Origen remarks that already the OT prophets announced the eventual apokatastasis, as is stated in Acts 3:20–22. Thus, in *CC* 7,72 he observes: "The prophecies speak a great deal, albeit obscurely, of the *total abolition of evil* and of the *rectification of every soul*." Origen plays, not only on the therapeutic meaning of ἀποκαθίστημι, but also on that related to the restoration to freedom and homeland after captivity, to indicate that apokatastasis will be not only healing, but also liberation and a return to our homeland (ἡ ἀρχαία ἡμῶν πατρίς in *Sel. in Ps.* 117). At the resurrection of Christ's body, which is all humanity (an idea that will be emphasised by Gregory Nyssen: "his body is the whole human nature," *In Illud* 21 Downing), or all *logika*,<sup>507</sup> those who are now in prison will receive the promised goods in their homeland (*Comm. in Io.* 10,42).

<sup>505</sup> The very same notion is set out in another homily: in Scripture *tristia quaeque prima dicuntur et secunda quae laeta sunt* [...] *Manifestetur Dei sermonem subvertere mala et aedificare optima, eradicare vitia quasi agricolam bonum, ut in purgato campo uberrima virtutum messis oriatur* (*Hom. in Ez.* 1,12).

<sup>506</sup> For this separation in Marcion see Hippolytus *Ref.* 10,19,3; Tertullian *Adv. Marc.* 4,17,11–12; Ps. Tertullian *AH* 6.

<sup>507</sup> See my "Clement's Notion of the Logos."

Origen applies to apokatastasis other OT passages in which ἀποκαθίστημι is used, such as Ez 17:23: “he will restore his vineyards.” These “will be restored [ἀποκαταστήσονται] in Christ. It is in Christ that this prophecy will be fulfilled.”

Indeed, in Origen's view, like in Gregory of Nyssa's afterwards, the eventual apokatastasis entirely depends on Christ,<sup>508</sup> and not on a metaphysical necessity or even a physico-cosmological necessity, as in the case of Stoicism (in contrast to the purported dependence of the apokatastasis theory on “pagan philosophy”<sup>509</sup>). In particular, apokatastasis depends on Christ's inhumanation, death, and resurrection.<sup>510</sup> Before Christ's resurrection Origen expresses all his awe: *multo sit magnificentius in laudibus Dei resuscitasse Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum a mortuis, quam fecisse caelum et terram, creasse angelos, et coelestes condidisse uirtutes* (*Comm. in Rom.* 4,7).<sup>511</sup> Soon after, in 4,10, which I have already quoted, Origen will assert that Christ's sacrifice, although it took place once, has the power of healing and rectifying all rational creatures in all aeons,<sup>512</sup> and that at the same time this does not happen against their free will. The same principle is expounded in *Comm. in Rom.* 2,13,27: *Iesu sanguis [...] tam pretiosus fuit ut solus pro omnium redemptione sufficeret*. Christ's sacrifice pacifies all rational creatures with God: *pacificauit per sanguinem crucis suae non solum quae in terra sunt, sed etiam quae in caelis* (*Comm. in Rom.* 10,9,12–14); *Reconciliauit utrosque in uno corpore Deo per crucem [...] mors eius mortem inimicitiae dedit ei quae erat inter*

<sup>508</sup> S. Fernández, “El carácter cristológico de la bienaventuranza final,” in *Origeniana VIII*, 641–648; Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History*, 65–116; Ramelli, “Origen and Apokatastasis: A Reassessment.” See also H.U. von Balthasar, *Origenes: Geist und Feuer* (Salzburg, 1938<sup>2</sup>), *Prolog*; van Laak, *Allversöhnung*, 90.

<sup>509</sup> On these accusations see, e.g., E.A. Clark, *The Origenistic Controversy* (Princeton, 1992); E. Prinzivalli, *Magister Ecclesiae* (Rome, 2002); W. Bienert, “Zur Entstehung des Antiorigenismus,” in *Origeniana VIII*, 829–842.

<sup>510</sup> *Pro salute humani generis incarnatus et passus sit et morte sua destruxerit mortem et resurrectione reddiderit uitam.*

<sup>511</sup> The same is expressed by Origen when he, looking at the glorious end of the history of the *logika*, which is apokatastasis, declares all his admiration before God's “magniloquence [μεγαλοφωνία], not in words, but in deeds.” Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy*, 404 n. 132 rightly observes that the term *μεγαλοφωνία* occurs, after Origen, in Eusebius, Athanasius, Didymus, the Cappadocians, and Maximus the Confessor. It seems to me significant that these are all admirers of Origen, who also had a more or less clear penchant for the apokatastasis doctrine, as I show in the present monograph.

<sup>512</sup> See Ramelli, “The Universal and Eternal Validity.” In the same way, the controversial *Princ.* 4,3, on which the accusation of Jerome, Theophilus, and Justinian is based that Origen posited a new crucifixion for the salvation of the demons, must be understood in the sense that Christ's one sacrifice has had a salvific effect for the demons, including the future aeons.

*nos et Deum [...] morte sua peccato ipsi intulerit mortem* (ibid. 4,12,55–78); Jesus, as a high priest, offered himself “not only for the sake of humans, but also for *all rational creatures*” (*Comm. in Io.* 1,35,255).<sup>513</sup> Origen describes Christ as the saviour and propitiatory offering for all, “not only for our sins, but also for the whole world” (*CC* 3,49; cf. 4,28). Indeed, Christ can save not only all humanity, but also all rational creatures, because he did not take up only humanity (by means of his incarnation, or better inhumanation), but also all rational creatures with his assumption of the *logikon* Jesus Christ, and at the same time with his being the Logos. Both the Son’s assumption of the *logika* and Christ’s sacrifice enables the salvation of the *logika*; neither faith nor good deeds alone can do so, but Christ’s blood can: *Ab ira uentura etiam si fides nostra nos saluet, etiam si opera iustitiae, super haec tamen omnia multo magis sanguis Christi saluos nos faciet* (*Comm. in Rom.* 4,11,73–75). Indeed his sacrifice, prefigured by Isaac’s, and resurrection bring about the restoration of all the world, of “every creature”: *Gaudens unicum offerebat quia in eum non interitum posteritatis sed reparationem mundi et innouationem totius creaturae, quae per resurrectionem Domini restituta est, cogitabat* (ibid. 4,7,41–43). Latin *restituta est* corresponds to a form of ἀποκαθίστημι, and *reparatio mundi* may translate ἀποκατάστασις τοῦ κόσμου. The restoration of all creatures is their liberation from evil, their “justification” or “setting right,” which is realised only thanks to Christ’s resurrection: *resurrexit propter iustificationem nostram [...] surrexit nobis Christus ad iustificationem nostram* (ibid. 100–103).

In *Princ.* 2,6,1–2 Origen emphasises the importance of Christ’s inhumanation, death, and resurrection, and the link between Christ’s inhumanation and human salvation is well expressed in *Dial. Her.* 7: “humanity would not have been wholly saved if Christ had not taken up humanity in its wholeness.”<sup>514</sup> Christ’s incarnation was necessary to destroy sin in flesh: *de*

<sup>513</sup> Origen interprets Heb 2:9, in which both variants support apokatastasis: Christ “experienced death for the sake of all apart from God [χωρὶς Θεοῦ] / for the grace of God [χάρτι Θεοῦ].” Christ died for all creatures. One variant is picked up in the later *Comm. in Rom.* 3,4(7),163–166 and 3,5(8),10–11, with the same conclusion that apokatastasis depends on Christ: *Detinebatur ergo apud hostes humani generis captiuitas peccato tamquam bello superata; uenit Filius Dei qui factus est nobis non solum Sapientia a Deo et Iustitia et Sanctificatio, sed et Redemptio, et semet ipsum dedit redemptionem [...] pro omni genere humano redemptionem semet ipsum dedisset, ut eos qui in peccatorum captiuitate tenebantur redimeret, dum sine Deo pro omnibus mortem gustat.*

<sup>514</sup> Origen’s perspective on the salvific value of Christ’s inhumanation is taken over by S. Finlan, *Problems with Atonement* (Collegeville, 2005): after a *status quaestionis* of the critical debate on redemption (1–10), he analyses “pagan” and Jewish sacrificial practices as

*peccato damnauit peccatum in carne, et mundum quidem reconciliauit Deo, exiit autem principatus et potestates tyranni, triumphans eas in semet ipso* (*Comm. in Rom.* 5,1,501–505).<sup>515</sup> The importance of Christ's resurrection in respect to apokatastasis is clear, e.g., from *ibid.* 4,7,3: "the whole creation was restored through the Lord's resurrection." This universal restoration performed by Christ-Logos is identified with the *telos*, i.e. the "conversion to God and transformation of the entire world" (*ibid.* 2,4,5) and "the return of the whole universe to God" (*CC* 4,99). Christ defeats the devil as the holder of the power of death, which is evil (*Comm. in Rom.* 5,3,65–70). Therefore, it is Christ who enables the annihilation of evil, which is the main premise for apokatastasis. Indeed, sin is eliminated by Christ: *Pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum [...] apparuit in nouissimis diebus ad destructionem peccati* [*Hebr* 9:26] [...] *damnauit peccatum in carne sua ut iustificatio legis impleatur in nobis [...] hostiam carnis Christi quae oblata est pro peccato et damnauit peccatum, hoc est fugauit et abstulit* (*ibid.* 6,12,64; 67,70–76).

For the elimination of evil from humanity, not only the sacrifice of Christ, but also his inhumanation is crucial: evil is won thanks to Christ, who is human (indeed, is all humanity) and yet has no sin (so that 1Pet 2:22 can be referred to him). Indeed, as Wis 7:30 makes it clear, evilness has no grasp over divine Wisdom (σοφίας δὲ οὐκ ἰσχύει κακία), and Wisdom is the very first *epinoia* of Christ, the second being Logos (but the order is reversed in *Comm. in Cant.* 3,6,4: *Verbo et Sapientia et Veritate et Iustitia et Pace omnibusque virtutibus*). This passage strongly influenced Origen's Christology: in Wis 7:26 we find the definition of Wisdom as ἀπαύγασμα of God's eternal light, a definition that is applied to Christ in Hebrews and on which Origen will base his very demonstration of the Son's coeternity with the Father.<sup>516</sup> And

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the cultural background of the atonement doctrine (11–38; see now *Sacrifice, Scripture, and Substitution*, eds. A.W. Astell–S. Goodhart [Notre Dame, IN 2011] and my review in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2012). Within an analysis of Paul's use of cultic imagery (39–62) it is remarked that Jesus proclaimed the possibility of forgiveness and salvation for all. After Paul, the notion of atonement was reinforced (63–83); Irenaeus, Origen, and Augustine preferred the idea of Christ victorious over evil and death; Origen also insisted on the salvific nature of Jesus's very life and teaching. The difficulties of the atonement doctrine (84–116) lead Finlan to decide that Jesus's death was not a sacrifice planned by God as a ransom (119); the concept of sacrifice should be removed. Christ's very inhumanation was salvific (117–124). This is what Origen too thought, but adding the salvific effect of Christ's cross and resurrection as well.

<sup>515</sup> Cf. *Comm. in Rom.* 4,8,40–44 relying on Eph 2:14–15: *Christus aduenit ut inimicitias solueret et pacem faceret ac dissidentes nos propter saepem malitiae, quam peccando texuimus, reconciliaret Deo, peccati saepe resoluta.*

<sup>516</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism" and "Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth."

in Wis 7:27 Wisdom is described as one and many, one with many powers, which is the very characterisation of Christ-Logos-Wisdom in Origen.<sup>517</sup>

Also, Christ's illuminating and therapeutic activity qua Logos performs an indispensable preparation for the final apokatastasis:

It is not only possible, but also the case that *all rational creatures* will eventually submit to one Law [...] We profess that at a certain point the Logos will have obtained the hegemony over *all rational creatures* and will have *transformed every soul to the perfection* that is proper to it, when each one, exerting its own free will, will have *made its own choices* and reached the state that it had elected. But we hold that it will not happen as in the case of material bodies [...] it is not so in the case of illnesses derived from sin. For it is certainly *not the case that the supreme God, who dominates over all rational creatures, can not cure them*. Indeed, since the Logos is *more powerful than any evil that can exist in the soul* [πάντων γὰρ τῶν ἐν ψυχῇ κακῶν δυνατώτερος ὁ Λόγος], it applies the *necessary therapy* to every individual, according to God's will. And the ultimate end of all things will be *the elimination of evil* [τὸ τέλος τῶν πραγμάτων ἀναίρεθῆναι ἐστὶ τὴν κακίαν]. (CC 8,72)

No being is incurable for Christ-Logos. This is what Origen argues also in *Princ.* 3,6,5, where, as I suggested, he corrects Plato's view that the worst sinners are "incurable" (ἀνίατοι) on the basis of the argument of divine omnipotence: *nihil enim Omnipotenti impossibile est, nec insanabile est aliquid Factori suo*. The creation (which for Origen is *ex nihilo*)<sup>518</sup> and the restoration are signs of God's omnipotence, as well as of God's ἀγαθότης.

The Christological foundation of apokatastasis for Origen—as for Gregory Nyssen in *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, who closely follows Origen's argument—is also clear from the eventual submission of all *logika* to Christ-Logos and hence the Father. For this will coincide with their salvation, being their voluntary adhesion to the Good. Origen argues for this in *Prin.* 1,6,1, citing Ps 61:1, which will be cited by Gregory too:<sup>519</sup>

In unum sane finem putamus quod *bonitas Dei* per Christum suum *universam revocet creaturam*, subactis ac subditis etiam inimicis [...]. Quae ergo est subiectio qua Christo omnia debent esse subiecta? Ego arbitror quia haec ipsa qua nos quoque optamus ei esse subiecti, qua subiecti ei sunt et apostoli et omnes sancti [...]. *Subiectionis enim nomen, qua Christo subicimur, salutem quae a Christo est* indicat subiectorum. Sicut et David dicebat: "Nonne Deo *subiecta* erit anima mea? Ab ipso enim *salutare* meum."<sup>520</sup>

<sup>517</sup> See Eadem, "Cristo-Logos in Origene."

<sup>518</sup> See my "The Dialogue of Adamantius."

<sup>519</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism," for Origen, and for Gregory "The Trinitarian Theology."

<sup>520</sup> Cf. *Hom. in Lev.* 7,2 and *Princ.* 2,3,3 referring to 1 Cor 15:15–28: "since all will be subjected

Origen interprets universal submission to Christ as universal salvation also in many other places, such as *Princ.* 3,5,7, with a polemic against “subordinationists” that will be taken over *ad litteram* by Nyssen:

In consummatione saeculi in semet ipso complectens *omnes*, quos *subicit Patri et qui per eum veniunt ad salutem*, cum ipsis et in ipsis ipse quoque subiectus dicitur Patri, dum omnes in ipso constant et ipse est caput omnium et in ipso est *salutem consequentium plenitudo*. Hoc ergo est quod de eo dicit apostolus: “Cum autem ei omnia fuerint subiecta, tunc et ipse Filius subiectus erit ei, qui sibi subdidit omnia, ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus.” Verum nescio quo pacto haeretici, non intellegentes apostolicum sensum [...], subiectionis in Filio nomen infamant [...] *subiectio Christi ad Patrem beatitudinem nostrae perfectionis ostendit*, et suscepti ab eo operis palmam declarat, cum non solum regendi ac regnandi summam, quam in universa emendaverat creatura, verum etiam oboedientiae et subiectionis correcta reparataque humani generis Patri offerat instituta. Si ergo *bona et salutaris accipitur ista subiectio*, qua subiectus esse dicitur Filius Patri, valde consequens et cohaerens est ut et inimicorum quae dicitur Filio Dei esse *subiectio salutaris quaedam intellegatur et utilis*, ut sicut cum dicitur Filius Patri subiectus, *perfecta universae creaturae restitutio declaratur*, ita cum Filio Dei inimici dicuntur esse subiecti, *subiectorum salus* in eo intellegatur et *reparatio perditorum*.<sup>521</sup>

More pithily, in *Comm. in Matt. Ser.* 8 Origen declares that “subjection means the salvation of those who submit.” The same notion is developed in a more articulated way in *Comm. in Io.* 6,57 (37): “although God benefits the world by reconciling it to himself in Christ, while it had become his enemy as a consequence of sin, however he distributes his benefits according to a plan, not putting his enemies as a stool under his feet all at once. For, the Father says to him who is the Lord of each of us: ‘Take your seat to my right, until I put your enemies as a stool for your feet,’<sup>522</sup> which will occur when the last enemy, death, will be annihilated by him. So, if we grasp what it means to be subjected to Christ, especially in the light of this passage: ‘And once all have submitted to him, he himself, the Son, will submit to him who has subjected everything to him,’ then we shall understand God’s lamb, who takes up the

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to Christ, necessarily this condition will extend to all, to whom the subjection to Christ is referred. And all those who are subjected to Christ in the end will be also submitted to the Father, to whom Christ will hand his reign.”

<sup>521</sup> See also *Comm. in Rom.* 7,3,59–68.

<sup>522</sup> Ps 109:1 LXX; Hebr 1:13 and 10:13. See my “Origen’s interpretation of Hebrews 10:13.” On Hebr 1:13 see also J. Jipp, “The Son’s Entrance into the Heavenly World: The Soteriological Necessity of the Scriptural *Catena* in Hebrews 1.5–14,” *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010) 557–575, *praes.* 569–575, the Son’s enthronement is crucial to humanity’s salvation.

sin of the world, in a way *worthy of the goodness of the God of the universe*.” This of what becomes God’s majesty and goodness is a core criterion in all of Origen’s thought,<sup>523</sup> and a basic one for his doctrine of apokatastasis: to his mind, only purifying suffering, and not retributive punishment, is worthy of God; only the healing and illumination of rational creatures is worthy of God, and not their destruction or eternal death.

I add another significant passage from Origen’s homilies on Psalms 36–38.<sup>524</sup> The notion of the body of Christ subsuming all humanity (on the basis of 1 Cor 12:27 interpreted in an inclusive way) is widespread in Origen,<sup>525</sup> but it also extends to all rational creatures, who thus constitute the body of the Logos, and even to all creation, as Origen boldly states in *Hom. 2 in Ps. 36: Apostolus dicit quia corpus Christi sumus et membra ex parte. Christus ergo, cuius omne hominum genus, immo fortassis totius creaturae universitas, corpus est ...* This is the notion of the cosmic Christ, well attested in Bardaisan immediately before Origen.<sup>526</sup> Origen goes on to express one of his favourite ideas, which will inspire Gregory of Nyssa closely for his main thesis in *In illud*: the final submission of Christ to God will be a submission of his body, i.e. all humanity or all (rational) creatures, and this submission will be a salvific submission. This is why Origen explains in the same homily

<sup>523</sup> A separate study will be prepared on this point in Origen and other Fathers. The clearest expression for Origen is in his Commentary on John, but also in *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* is this principle enforced. See briefly S. Keough, “Eschatology Worthy of God: The Goodness of God and the Groaning of Creation in Origen’s *De Principiis*,” in *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010) 189–195. It must be added that this principle informs not only Origen’s eschatology or exegesis, but all of his thought.

<sup>524</sup> It is likely that soon Origen’s homilies on Psalms available to us will increase. As announced by Lorenzo Perrone in a letter from 10.VI.2012 and by the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München on 11.VI.2012, Marina Molin Pradel, who is preparing the new catalogue of the Greek ms. of the Staatsbibliothek, noticed that Codex Monacensis Graecus 314 (XI–XII cent., 371 folios), containing 29 anonymous homilies on Psalms, included the Greek text of four of the five homilies of Origen on Psalm 36, so far known thanks to Rufinus’s translation, and that the list of the other homilies in the ms. mostly corresponds to that presented by Jerome in *Ep. 33* to Paula. These are especially nine homilies on Psalm 77, so far lost. Some passages correspond to catenae fragments from *Hom. in Ps. 77*. Lorenzo Perrone, Emanuela Prinzivalli, Antonio Cacciari, and Chiara Barilli are preparing a critical edition. Note that in Monacensis Gr. 314 Origen’s homilies are handed down *anonymously*, as we know they sometimes were already in the time of Pamphilus, around 300 CE (see below, Ch. 2, the section on Pamphilus).

<sup>525</sup> Ample analysis in Ramelli, “Clement’s Notion of the Logos.” In Paul (1 Cor 12–14) this notion probably had Stoic roots. I limit myself to citing M.V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ* (New York, 2006).

<sup>526</sup> See my *Bardaisan of Edessa*.



that, as long as even just one rational creature is not subject to God—that is, if one has still evil in itself—, Christ, who subsumes them all, cannot submit to the Father:

Si alicuius peccati macula inuritur, et non subiectus Deo, recte ille [sc. Christ] nondum dicitur esse subiectus, cuius sint membra illi qui non sunt subiecti Deo. Cum autem *omnes* eos qui corpus suum dicuntur ac membra *sanos* habuerit [...] *sanis omnibus membris Deoque subiectis* merito se dicit esse subiectum ille cuius nos membra Deo in omnibus oboedimus.

(Hom. 2 in Ps. 36)

Origen indeed, as Gregory will do after him, is explaining 1 Cor 15:28, not in terms of a subordination of the Son to the Father, but in terms of a universal submission which, being voluntary as it becomes spirits, will coincide with the universal purification from sin and thus universal salvation:

Apostolus magna quidem et mystica de subiectione significat, dicens: “Cum autem subiecta ei fuerint omnia, tunc et ipse Filius subiectus erit ei qui sibi subdidit omnia” [...] subiectione videlicet illa quam *de spiritu intelligi dignum est*. Interim necesse est omnia Christo esse subiecta ut tunc demum etiam ipse, *impletis omnibus et perfectis, per subiectionem*, tamquam victoriae suae hanc referens palmam, Patri dicatur futurus esse subiectus. Quod nisi *mystice intellegatur*,<sup>527</sup> impium aliquid sine dubio non advertentibus indicare creditur. Non enim putandum est quod Filius Dei, nunc quidem Patri nequaquam subiectus sit, in novissimis vero temporibus, cum sibi fuerint cuncta subiecta, tunc erit etiam ipse subiectus, sed quia omnia nostra in se recipit.

The same is stressed by Origen in *Hom. in Luc.* 30: “Christ *reigns in order to save*.” The reign during which he will submit his enemies will be a salvific reign. He will subject all nations to himself, “so that they may devote themselves to *justice, truth, and all the other virtues*. He will indeed reign as Justice itself.” The identification of Christ with Justice and the other virtues—so that during his reign he will make all rational creatures just and virtuous—is a constant in Origen’s works; for instance, he emphasises that “Christ is Justice itself, and all the just participate in Christ” (CC 6,64).<sup>528</sup> On this basis, Origen also interprets the beatitude, “blessed are you, when you are persecuted

<sup>527</sup> *Mystica* and *mystice* reflect Origen’s use of *μυστικός* in reference to the allegorical/spiritual meaning of Scripture. He does not use it to describe his own mystical experience in *Hom. in Cant.* 1,7: “God is my witness that I have often perceived the Bridegroom coming close to me and being present to me to the most intense degree. Then he disappeared all of a sudden [...] I eagerly hope that he will come again, and sometimes he does.”

<sup>528</sup> Cf. *Hom. in Iud.* 1,4: *Sicut iustitia opus Dei est, ita et iniustitia opus zabuli* [sc. *diaboli*] [...] *Cognovisse ergo dicuntur opus illi Dei qui faciunt opus eius*.

*because of me*” as a blessing on anyone who “is persecuted *because of justice*,” ἐὰν διώκεται ποτέ τις διὰ δικαιοσύνην (*Hom. in Ier.* 1,14).

Another way in which apokatastasis according to Origen depends on Christ lies in the so-called theology of the image, which will be dear to Gregory of Nyssa too. In their view, the image of God in every human being (*Gen* 1:26) can be blurred by sin, but never cancelled.<sup>529</sup> Now this too depends on Christ, who is the very image of God (“if the Logos is the image of the invisible God, it is its invisible image [ἀόρατος εἰκὼν],” *ap. Athan. Decr.* 27<sup>530</sup>) and has assumed the whole of humanity, thus restoring the image of God in it (e.g. *Comm. in Cant.* 3,8,10: *illae animae cotidie innovantur ad imaginem eius qui creavit eas* [*Col* 3:10]. *Quia enim per innovationem sui imaginem in se reparant Filii Dei ...*).<sup>531</sup> The individual counterpart is the voluntary adhesion of each rational creature to Christ-Logos, an adhesion which in turn is helped by the Logos’s healing and illuminating action. This voluntary adhesion is the acquisition of the likeness to God or assimilation to God: ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ,<sup>532</sup> an ideal that is both Biblical (*Gen* 1:26) and Platonic (*Theaet.* 176B—and for Origen this was a further proof that Plato was inspired either by the Bible or by the same Logos who inspired, and is “incarnated” in, the Bible). In *Princ.* 3,6,1, joining 1 *Cor* 15:28 to several quotations from John, Origen delineates the passage from image to likeness and from likeness to unity in the end: εἰκὼν (from the beginning) > ὁμοίωσις (thanks to moral improvement in this or the future life) > ἓν (total unity in apokatastasis; God “all in all”). That the “image of God” is an initial datum, but the “likeness to God” has still to come is stated even in simpler works such as Origen’s homilies (*Hom. in Ez.* 13,2<sup>533</sup>). In *Princ.* 4,4,9–10 Origen insists on the eventual restoration of the image and likeness of God in each one thanks to Christ-Logos: “even if

<sup>529</sup> This conviction is expressed, e.g., in *Hom. in Gen.* 13,4; *CC* 4,83; 2,11. That the image of God in humans is blurred by sin and reinforced by virtue is also clear from *Hom. in Luc.* 8,2–3 and *CC* 7,66. See my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, first Integrative Essay.

<sup>530</sup> Discussion of this passage in Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism.”

<sup>531</sup> See also *Comm. in Cant.* 2,5,15: *pulchritudinem suam* [*sc. animae*], *quam ad imaginem Dei in conditione suscepit, si reparare aut restituere potuerit, contemplari*.

<sup>532</sup> Bibliography on this score is, and is becoming, abundant. I only cite H. Merki, ‘Ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ (Fribourg, 1952). In Middle Platonism Alcinous, *Didasc.* 28, grounds this ideal, the *telos* of the human being, in the analysis of several passages of Plato. Plotinus, in his treatment of virtues precisely on the basis of *Theaet.* 176B, in *Enn.* 1,2,6 proclaims that the human *telos* “is not that of being free from any guilt, but of being God.”

<sup>533</sup> *Dixit quidem Deus: “Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.” Attamen necdum consecutus es similitudinem. Fecit quippe Deus hominem; ad imaginem Dei fecit: ubi est similitudo? Cum apparuerit similes ei erimus.*

the intellect, out of laziness, loses its capacity for receiving God in itself in a pure and integral way, however it *retains in itself the possibility* of recovering a better knowledge, when the interior human being, which is also called rational, is *restored to the image and likeness of God* who created it. This is why the Prophet says: ‘All the earth will remember and return to the Lord and all peoples will knee before him.’<sup>534</sup> If one dares affirm the ontological destruction of what has been made in the image and likeness of God, in my view he extends his impiety to the Son of God as well. For this is called in Scripture ‘image of God’” (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15).<sup>535</sup> That it is Christ who enables the restoration of God’s image in all is clear from *Hom. in Gen.* 1.13: “Let us contemplate unceasingly this image of God, so to be transformed into its likeness. For if the human being, who was created in God’s image, has become similar to the devil due to sin, assuming the devil’s image which is against its nature, all the more so *will it receive that form which was given to it according to its nature, through the Logos and its power, assuming God’s image.*”

It is no accident that precisely the passage from image to likeness, expressly connected with Plato’s ideal of assimilation to God, opens Ch. 6 of Book 3 of *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, devoted to apokatastasis: “The supreme Good, to which the whole rational nature tends, and which is also called the end of

<sup>534</sup> Ps 21:28. See also *Sel. in Ps.* 21: “‘All the earth will remember and return to the Lord.’ David did well to say, ‘will remember.’ As they received their being from God, they will remember their Creator and, after remembering, will return. Not only one nation, not only two, but *all the earth* will return, illuminated by the light of the knowledge of God.” Apokatastasis will be universal.

<sup>535</sup> That the Son is God’s image is repeated by Origen in several points; besides the passage preserved by Athanasius (*Decr.* 27), see e.g. *Princ.* 1.2,6; *Hom. in Ier.* 1.13; the human being is the image of Christ-Logos who is God’s true image. Like Philo and Clement (*Protr.* 10,98; *Strom.* 5.14,94) as well as Musonius, Origen maintains that the human being is God’s image not in its body, since God is incorporeal, but in its intellect, “in the complex of virtues that in God are found in a substantial way, and can be found in the human being thanks to its zeal and imitation of God [...] This is why there seems to be a certain kinship [*consanguineitatem*] between God and humans” (*Princ.* 4.4,10; cf. 2.10,7: not only the body, but not even the inferior, irrational parts of the soul are “image of God”; only “the best part” is, while the rest “was received afterwards, because of the fall due to free will, against the nature of the original creation and pureness”). Musonius too—known to Clement and probably to Origen—thought that humans are *μίμημα Θεοῦ* because they possess virtues. See my *Musonio* (Milan, 2001); *Stoici romani* (Milan, 2008), 689–943; “Transformations of the Household and Marriage Theory between Neo-Stoicism, Middle-Platonism, and Early Christianity,” *Rivista Filosofia Neoscolastica* 100 (2008) 369–396; “Dieu et la philosophie.” Origen repeatedly criticised those Christians who thought that the image of God is also in human bodies, such as Irenaeus, *Dem.* 22 (CC 6,63; *Sel. in Gen.* 1.26 against Melito’s anthropomorphism).

all things, also according to the definition of many philosophers,<sup>536</sup> consists in becoming similar to God insofar as possible [*prout possibile est, similem fieri Deo*]. But I think that the philosophers did not find this idea themselves; rather, they *drew it from the Holy Scripture*.<sup>537</sup> For Moses was the first who formulated it, when he described the first creation of the human being, saying: 'And God said, Let us make the human being in our image and likeness.' And he added: 'And God made the human being; God made it in the image of God'" (Gen 1:26–27). The fact that first the likeness is mentioned but in the second sentence it is omitted has Origen suspect<sup>538</sup> that there is a difference between image and likeness, and that the likeness is reserved for the *telos* and depends on voluntary engagement. This is also the key to Origen's persuasion that the end will be similar to,<sup>539</sup> but also *better* than, the beginning, as it implies moral progress.<sup>540</sup> This is how he goes on:

The fact that Moses said, 'God created it in the image of God,' without mentioning the likeness, indicates that the human being since its first creation was granted the dignity of the image, but *the perfection of the likeness* has been reserved for the end, in that it must attain it by imitating God with its own

<sup>536</sup> Plato *Theaet.* 176B, which had already been taken over by Clement *Strom.* 2,97,1.

<sup>537</sup> E.g. Justin *I Apol.* 59–60; Tatian *Or. ad Gr.* 31 ff.; 40; Theophilus *Ad Aut.* 1,14; 3,23; Clement *Strom.* 1,22,10, in reference to Aristobulus and Numenius; 1,17,87; 5,13,90; 6,2,27; 2,19,100, where the *Theaetetus* passage on the assimilation to God is traced back to Deut 13:5. Origen's other passages on this are even more numerous, e.g. *Comm. in Cant.* prol.; CC 1,15; 6,19; 7,30 in which Plato's thought is made dependent on Scripture.

<sup>538</sup> Clement *Strom.* 2,22,131 already ascribed the image-likeness distinction to "some of ours": "the human being received its essence 'according to the image' right at its birth; as for that 'according to the likeness,' it will have to receive it later, as it becomes perfect." See also *Protr.* 11,117; *Strom.* 1,1,9; 2,8,39; 4,26,171: "the 'gnostic' must imitate God insofar as possible. It also seems to me that even poets call those whom they deem the elect 'God-like looking' etc. Thus, they are closely inspired by the Biblical saying 'in God's image and likeness.'" The image-likeness distinction is also found in Origen CC 4,30; *Comm. in Rom.* 4,5; *De or.* 27,2; *Hom. in Ez.* 13,2; *Comm. in Io.* 20,22(20).

<sup>539</sup> Cf. e.g. *Princ.* 1,6,2: *quae rursum per bonitatem Dei, per subiectionem Christi atque unitate Spiritus Sancti in unum finem, qui sit initio similis, revocantur*; 2,1,1; 2,1,3 (but on the similarity between beginning and end in a single world); 3,6,1,3. This idea, highlighted by W. Völker, *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes* (Tübingen, 1931) and H. Cornélis, *Les fondements cosmologiques de l'eschatologie d'Origène* (Paris, 1959), was condemned in Anathema 15 of the 553 Constantinople Council: τὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν αὐτὴν εἶναι τῷ τέλει.

<sup>540</sup> I agree with Edwards, *Origen against*, 112 ff., and H. Pietras, "L'apocrifo giudaico *Preghera di Giuseppe* nell'interpretazione origeniana," in *Origeniana X* (Leuven, 2011), 545–560: the end is better than the beginning because some *logika* will be more perfect than the way they were created; the end will see not only the return of the *logika*, but "the voluntary development of the saints." On Origen's valuing of progress: G. Lettieri, "Progresso," in *Origene. Dizionario*, ed. A. Monaci (Rome, 2000), 379–392.

industriousness. Thus, having been given from the beginning the possibility of the perfection through the dignity of the image, it can achieve the perfect likeness through its works.<sup>541</sup> (*Princ.* 3,6,1)

Likeness to God is acquired through personal effort and good deeds, though elsewhere Origen also insists on the importance of grace to this end.<sup>542</sup> Origen indeed thinks of a synergy of divine grace and human will, which will finally adhere to the Good voluntarily, but this adhesion, and the relevant attainment of the likeness to God, is helped, and ultimately guaranteed, by Christ-Logos.

In CC 8,72, already quoted, Christ-Logos determines the apokatastasis, by means of this healing and instruction, which enables the complete elimination of evil (in that no one will choose it any longer). Indeed, Origen calls apokatastasis also “palingenesis” (παλιγγενεσία) and declares that it will take place in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ) at the end of time, when he will sit on the throne of his glory, and it depends only on Christ, who will make those involved “pure to the highest degree” (*Comm. in Matth.* 5,15,23\*). The dependence of apokatastasis on Christ is also clear to Origen’s mind from 1 Cor 15:23–28 and Phil 2:10, which announce the submission of all rational creatures to Christ and the annihilation of evil: *terrestrium et caelestium fiat unus grex et unus pastor* [sc. Christ] *et sit Deus omnia in omnibus* (*Comm. in Rom.* 7,2,182–184). Indeed, it is thanks to Christ’s work that “evil will be wiped away from the entire world” and “not even the tiniest sin will remain in the reign of the Father, and the word will be fulfilled that ‘God will be all in all’” (*Comm. in Io.* 1,32). Christ “was made all for the salvation of all” (*Hom. in Cant.* 2.3). By

<sup>541</sup> Origen often insists on the imitation of God and Christ (*Princ.* 1,6,2; 2,6,3; 3,5,7; 4,4,4,10); it especially consists in the love of one’s neighbours and enemies (*Comm. in Io.* 20,13; *De or.* 22,4; CC 4,28) and the willingness to martyrdom: *Comm. in Io.* 2,34(28); 19,22(5); 28,3; *Comm. in Rom.* 5,5; *Hom. in Ier.* 14,7; *Exh. ad mart.* 36; 42; 50; *Hom. in Iud.* 7,2: *Mihi si concederet Deus ut proprio sanguine diluerer, ut baptismum secundum mortem pro Christo susceptam perciperem, securus ex isto saeculo discederem, ut veniens ad animam meam de hac vita exeuntem princeps huius mundi non inveniret quicquam*. On the end not identical to the beginning see J. Rius-Camps, “La hipótesis,” 101–103; on image and likeness in Origen: Crouzel, *Théologie*; G.S. Gasparro, “Restaurazione dell’immagine celeste e abbandono dell’immagine terrestre nella prospettiva origeniana della doppia creazione,” in *Archè e Telos*, ed. U. Bianchi (Milan, 1981), 231–266.

<sup>542</sup> E.g. *Princ.* 3,1,12,15 (pride, on the contrary, ascribes to its own merit what comes from grace; it is the most serious sin, that of Satan: *Hom. in Gen.* 5,6; *Hom. in Num.* 12,4; *Hom. in Iud.* 3,1; *Hom. in Ex.* 9,2,4,5; *Hom. in Luc.* 31,5; *Sel. in Ps.* 4,6). In *Princ.* 3,1,19, Origen explains that humans’ free choice of the Good is necessary but not sufficient for salvation, as grace is indispensable. Human free will is not emptied, though (*ibid.* 3,1,24). Cf. *Fr. in Eph.* 1; *Hom. in Ex.* 6,5 where likeness to God is made dependent on grace and not on nature. On Origen’s concept of grace see at least B. Drewery, *Origen and the Doctrine of Grace* (London, 1960).

means of his own death and resurrection Christ has destroyed the kingdom of death; death will be destroyed in the end, as “the last enemy” of 1 Cor 15:26 (*Comm. in Rom.* 5,1,560–572). Dying, Christ *destruxit eum qui habebat mortis imperium, id est diabolum, ut liberaret eos qui tenebantur a morte*, i.e. he destroyed spiritual death resulting from sin. Indeed, Christ *adytum iustificationis aperuit per quem vita ingrederetur ad homines* (ibid. 5,4,6–8). In *Sel. in Ps.* 41 the submission of all *logika* to Christ is related to the prediction of Phil 2:10, that every knee will bend before Christ. And this submission must be understood as the elimination of evil from every sinner (*Sel. in Ps.* 36), in accord with Origen’s aforementioned interpretation of the eventual submission of all to Christ as the salvation of all.

Origen’s Christocentric notion of apokatastasis is especially transparent in *Comm. in Io.* 32,26–39, where it is grounded in a great many passages from the Bible, the first being John 13:3: “the Father remitted all into the hands” of Christ. Origen relates this to other passages, such as Ps 109:1 and 1 Cor 15:24–28. If God says to Christ that he will “put his enemies under his feet,” then God will hand the enemies, too, to Christ. Origen also relies (in Chs. 26–27) on 1 Cor 15:22 (“As all die in Adam,<sup>543</sup> so will all be vivified in Christ”), in the sense that all the *logika* who died spiritually, due to sin, will be resuscitated by Christ, through their liberation from sin. This is announced in Rom 5:18–19 as the justification of all, performed by Christ.<sup>544</sup> Origen then passes on to 1 Cor 15:24–26, on which he lingers and which declares Christ’s destruction of evil and death (Chs. 30–31). Even the devil, the one who “raised his neck before the omnipotent Lord” (Job 15:25), will submit to Christ-Logos (Chs. 32–34). Ch. 35 is a meditation on universal apokatastasis and its dependence on Christ: the Logos, with its inhumanation, went far from the Godhead out of love for its creatures who had gone far from the Godhead, that these might “return into its hands” thanks to Jesus, because, “by following him, they will come to find themselves near God.” Origen warns that this restoration will take place in different times, depending on each rational creature’s merits; he interprets John 13:36 in this sense. Times will differ for each one, but in the end all will be purified and restored and the evil powers destroyed, including “the last enemy,” the devil qua evil and not qua creature (Chs. 37–39). Indeed, from the same Commentary on

<sup>543</sup> On Origen’s concept of Adam’s sin see C. Hammond Bammel, “Adam in Origen,” in *The Making of Orthodoxy*, ed. R. Williams (Cambridge 1989), 62–93.

<sup>544</sup> Origen highlights this passage’s universalism: *ut evidentius ostenderet omnes homines et multos homines idem esse, addit his: sicut per inobedientiam unius hominis peccatores constituti sunt multi, ita et per unius obedientiam iusti constituentur multi* (in *Rom.* 5,1).

John it is also clear that not only Origen's eschatology, but his metaphysics too is grounded in Christ,<sup>545</sup> *qua creator*. These two aspects are closely interrelated.

The restoration of creatures to God will be universal and take place thanks to the Logos. This is also highlighted in a later work, *Comm. in Rom.* 9,41,8, in which 1Cor 15:28 is joined to Phil 2:10: "But when he has 'handed the Kingdom to God the Father,' that is, presented to God as an offer all, *converted and reformed*, and has fully performed the mystery of the *reconciliation of the world*, then they will be in God's presence, that God's word may be fulfilled: "Because I live—the Lord says—*every knee* will bend before Me, *every tongue* will glorify God." Glorification is a sign of *voluntary* adhesion. Likewise in *Sel. in Ps.* 21 the submission of Christ's enemies during his reign is interpreted as their transformation from evil into good, performed by Christ: "He must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet' means 'until all *wicked* have become *righteous*.'"

The value of Christ's sacrifice is not in the least diminished, but it is rather enhanced, by Origen's doctrine of the series of aeons and their end in apokatastasis, which I have already analysed. This is clear, for instance, from *De or.* 27,15: Origen, reflecting on Heb 9:26 and Eph 2:7, argues that Christ's sacrifice was made once and for all aeons.<sup>546</sup> These aeons are not infinite or repetitive, but point to one *telos*, the apokatastasis of all, which is not a result of necessity, but of all rational creatures' voluntary adhesion to the Good. This *telos*, which is the perfection of all, is situated by Origen after all times and all aeons: *finem [...] non intelligas temporalem [...] Sed finem saeculorum perfectionem rerum intellige* (*Comm. in Cant.* 2,8,22). Now, all this will not happen without Christ's sacrifice. Origen insists that Christ died once, for all aeons, on the basis of Hebrews and the understanding of Jesus's priestly sacrifice therein:<sup>547</sup> since Christ's high priesthood is eternal, unlike the Jewish yearly high priesthood, the effectiveness of his sacrifice also is

<sup>545</sup> E.g. S. Spangler, "Christology as the Basis of Metaphysics in Origen's *Commentary on John*," in *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010), 247–251. See also Chr. Bruns, "Christologischer Universalismus. Der Johannesprolog in der Wirklichkeitsdeutung des Origenes," in *Im Anfang war der Logos ... Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Johannesprologs von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, eds. M. Enders–R. Kühn (Freiburg, 2010), 7–46.

<sup>546</sup> See Ramelli, "Universal and Eternal Validity"; Perrone, *La preghiera*, 228–229.

<sup>547</sup> On this sacrifice I limit myself to referring to K. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews* (Cambridge, 2008), who underlines the presentation of perfection in Hebrews as linked to the New Covenant and the heavenly realm and the insistence on Christ's victory over the devil and death. He identifies the author with a Jewish Hellenist of the Pauline mission who addressed Gentile Christians living in Rome after 70 CE.

eternal.<sup>548</sup> The power of Christ's cross is such as to enable the salvation of all rational creatures in all aeons (see also *Comm. in Rom.* 5,10,187–195). Origen repeats also in *Fr. in Iob* 387,14 that ἀπαξ γέγονε ὁ σταυρός, as well as in other passages, as opposed to the plurality (but not infinity!) of aeons. This is why Christ's sacrifice can provide the absolute eternity of apokatastasis, after all aeons. Apokatastasis depends on Christ's sacrifice and divine providence—whose importance is highlighted e.g. in *Princ.* 2,1,2; 2,9,7; 3, 1,17; 3,5,5 and whose harmonisation with individual free will I have already pointed out—and grace. In *Fr. in Rom. Cat.* 22,11, on the basis of Eph 2:7 and Rom 6:23, Origen declares that life eternal is a gift from God; it does not depend on us. And in *Princ.* 3,1,12.15 Origen remarks that the summit of beatitude is attained by grace. Retribution is commensurate with sins, but beatitude after purification is God's gift and has neither measure nor end (this is also why retribution is αἰώνιος, but life and beatitude is αἰδίος). Nyssen, as I shall show, will take up this idea in *De anima*.

Stephen Gobar, a Byzantine theologian from the sixth century—the century of the so-called condemnation of Origen—was well acquainted with the ideas of Origen and his followers, especially Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa. His work is lost, but it is excerpted by Photius (*Bibl. Cod.* 232, 287b–291b), who read a βιβλίον Στεφάνου τινὸς τριθείτου, ᾧ ἐπὶ κλην ὁ Γόβαρος. He wrote about Trinitarian theology, protology, and eschatology, the “skin tunics,” the resurrection, the Judgment, and the non-eternity of otherworldly punishments. He often reports what is very likely to have been Origen's true thought. For instance, from the eschatological viewpoint, in 288b the concept of the purifying function and limited duration of otherworldly punishments is clearly Origenian: “Those among sinners who are assigned to punishment [τῇ κολάσει] are *purified* from evil during that punishment [καθαίρονται τῆς κακίας ἐν αὐτῇ], and after this purification are *released* from punishment [μετὰ τὴν κάθαρσιν ἀπολύονται τῆς κολάσεως].” In the same way, the notion, expressed at 291b, that prayers are helpful to those who are being punished in the other world presupposes that the punishments of the dead are not eternal.<sup>549</sup> Even the debate on the immortality of souls and

<sup>548</sup> On Origen's relation to Judaism see at least J. McGuckin, “Origen on the Jews,” in *Christianity and Judaism*, ed. D. Wood (Oxford, 1992), 1–13; *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, eds. E. Grypeou–H. Spurling (Leiden, 2009); A. Tzvetkova, *Pentateuchauslegung bei Origenes und den frühen Rabbinen* (Frankfurt, 2010), with my review in *BMC R* 2011.05.50; S. Drake, “Images of Jewishness in Origen's *Letter to Africanus*,” in *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010) 253–266.

<sup>549</sup> Παντός τεθνεώτος ψυχὴ ὠφελεῖται μέγιστα διὰ τῶν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ ἐπιτελουμένων εὐχῶν καὶ προσφορῶν καὶ ἐλεημοσυνῶν.



intellectual creatures by nature or by grace, reflected in Gobar at 289b,<sup>550</sup> echoes Origen's ideas, as expounded especially in the *Dialogue with Heraclides*, but also elsewhere. Origen maintains that the soul is immortal by nature with respect to the death of the body, but it is mortal with respect to the real death, caused by sin. In regard to the latter kind of death, the soul will become immortal by grace (χάρισμα, δῶρον: Origen uses Paul's terminology) in the eventual apokatastasis, since there it will definitely admit of no sin any more, as I have pointed out previously. In the latter sense, the God-head alone is immortal by nature, because it is untouched by evil by nature, being the supreme Good. Even the idea of changing state between one order of rational creatures and another, expressed in 289b (αἱ ψυχαὶ τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν δαιμόνια γίνονται), corresponds to Origen's thought. Also, Gobar's account does not presuppose the preexistence of bare souls, but of *logika* endowed with a form of corporeality, not heavy, which again agrees with Origen's tenet that God alone is completely free from bodily matter (288a; cf. 289ab, where rational creatures are said to have been created before the sense-perceptible world and are declared to be equipped with some degree of corporeality<sup>551</sup>). Gobar even reports the same conception as is attested by Procopius, his quasi-contemporary, in *Comm. in Gen.* PG 87/1,221A, concerning the skin tunics, identified with the heavy, mortal body, as distinct from the luminous, prelapsarian body, which will be recovered at the resurrection: "One was the human prelapsarian body, which is also called 'luminous' [ὅπερ καὶ αὐγοειδὲς καλοῦσι], and another, different, is the postlapsarian body [ἄλλο τὸ μετὰ τὴν παράβασιν], which we wear now, made of flesh [σάρκινον]. This is identifiable with the skin tunics [τοῦτον ἐστὶν οἱ δερμάτινοι χιτῶνες], and this we shall take off at the resurrection [ὅπερ καὶ ἀποτιθέμεθα ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει]" (288a).<sup>552</sup> Procopius indeed reports similar ideas about the luminous, prelapsarian body as distinct from the mortal, fleshly body which only is identified with the skin tunics: "the fine body, worthy of life in paradise [τὸ λεπτομερὲς σῶμα καὶ ἄξιον τῆς ἐν παραδείσῳ διαγωγῆς], which some have called luminous [ὅ τινες αὐγοειδὲς ἐκάλεσαν]. The skin tunics, instead, are the referent of the words, 'You have dressed me with skin and flesh, you have knit me together

<sup>550</sup> Οἱ ἄγγελοι καὶ αἱ λογικαὶ ψυχαὶ καὶ πάντα τὰ νοερά κτίσματα φύσει καὶ κατὰ φύσιν εἰσι ἀφθαρτα, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀντικειμένου ὅτι οὐ φύσει ἀλλὰ χάριτί εἰσιν ἀθάνατοι, φύσει δὲ μόνος ὁ Θεός.

<sup>551</sup> Πρὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως καὶ ἀγγέλους ὁ Θεὸς ἔκτισε [...] οἱ ἄγγελοι καὶ οἱ δαίμονες σώμασιν ἦνωνται.

<sup>552</sup> See Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull'Anima*, and A. Lund-Jacobsen, "Gen 1–3 as Source for the Anthropology of Origen," *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008) 213–232: 215.

with bones and nerves' [Job 10:11]. They say that the soul at first used the luminous body as a vehicle [τῷ δὲ ἀγγοιδεῖ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐποχεῖσθαι πρώτως λέγουσιν]; later, this was dressed with the skin tunics [ὅπερ ὕστερον ἐνεδύσατο τοὺς δερματίνους χιτῶνας].” And there are undisputed passages from Origen that confirm that this was Origen's own view.<sup>553</sup> This was reflected in both Procopius and Gobar; the latter also included Origen's apokatastasis doctrine.

Origen was well aware that his eschatological thought could arouse the indignation of some people and even charges of “heresy.” This is clear from the opening of his treatment of eschatology in *Princ.* 1,6,1:

If anyone wishes to read and know so arduous and difficult themes, one must have a cultivated and complete intelligence. For, if one is deprived of a certain experience of such questions, these arguments will seem *useless* and superfluous to him. If, then, one is full of prejudices and biased on other questions, one will even deem these arguments *heretical* and opposite to orthodoxy, without trying to convince by means of rational reasoning, but merely judging according to his prejudices. Though, I myself express them with great *circumspection* and caution [...] for the sake of *discussion* more than definition.<sup>554</sup>

What Origen goes on to depict in his expectedly controversial treatment is the punishment-purification of individual sins, in the ways and times that become each one, and then universal restoration, which, as I have already pointed out, passes through voluntary submission to Christ. Indeed, “the end of the world will come when each one will be subjected to torments due to his sins [Matt 24:36], and God alone knows the time in which each one will *receive what he deserves*.”<sup>555</sup> However, I think that God's goodness, by means of Christ, will call back *all creatures to one and the same end*, after the defeat and submission of the enemies, too. For Scripture says, “Sit to my right, until I have put your enemies as a stool at your feet” [Ps 109:1]. Indeed, Christ must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet [...] For all must be submitted to Christ” in a salvific submission. Indeed, this treatment of eschatology in Chapter 6 of Book 1 concludes with the prevision

<sup>553</sup> See my *Preexistence of Souls?*

<sup>554</sup> The same awareness transpires from other passages such as *Hom. in Gen.* 7,2; 13,3; *Hom. in Lev.* 16,4; *Hom. in Luc.* 25,6; *Fr. in Tit.* PG 14,1306; cf. Jerome *Ep.* 84,10.

<sup>555</sup> Origen, in his concern for theodicy in the framework of his battle against “Gnostic” predestinationism, insists a great deal on the impartial justice of God who gives to each one what one deserves, e.g. in *Princ.* 1,8,4: “In God there is no distinction of persons [Rom 2:1]: God administers everything according to the merits and progresses of each one.”

of the restored unity, after “long future aeons during which the dispersion and division of the one Principle will be reintegrated into *one and the same end and likeness* [...] There will be a new heaven and a new earth [Isa 65:17; 66:22] [...] for those who tend to that blessed end when—it is said—the enemies too will submit and God will be ‘all in all’” (1Cor 15:28). All “will be restored to that *unity* which the Lord Jesus promises saying to his Father with regard to the disciples: ‘... that all may be one [John 17:20 ff.] just as we are one, I in them and You in me, that they too may be perfect in unity [John 17:22–23] [...] until all of us will reach the unity of faith and form the perfect human being, in the measure that befits the full maturity of Christ” (Eph 4:13). All creatures are called to one and the same end, *in unum finem revocantur* (*Princ.* 1,6,2); *ad unum perfectionis Dei finem cuncta festinant* (*Hom. in Gen.* 2,5). All will come to perfection: “We too shall be transformed [1Cor 15:52] [...] *the end and perfection of all will be realised*: those who were wicked, after enduring until the end the punishments inflicted to them *for the purification of their sins*, will *deserve* to inhabit that land. And those who have been obedient to the Word of God and will have proved capable of receiving, already here, God’s Wisdom and behaving accordingly, will merit the kingdom of that heaven, or of heavens” (*Princ.* 2,3,7).

Even in his homilies, which addressed a simpler public than his commentaries or his Περὶ ἀρχῶν,<sup>556</sup> and even in his later ones, although with prudence, Origen does allude to universal salvation: “‘All flesh will see God’s salvation’ [Luke 3:6] [...] what does Scripture mean by saying ‘all flesh’? That there is *no flesh that is excepted so as not to see God’s salvation*. I leave this to be understood by those who grasp the *mysteries* of Scripture” (*Hom. in Luc.* 22,5; cf. 32,5). Reticence about these “mysteries” indeed emerges also in *Hom. in Luc.* 23, where Origen is about to speak of what happens after

<sup>556</sup> The typologies of Origen’s Scriptural exegesis, with different degrees of complexity, is summarised by Jerome in the Preface to his translation of Origen’s Homilies on Ezekiel: *Origenis opuscula in omnem Scripturam esse triplicia. Primum eius opus excerpta sunt, quae graece σχόλια nuncupantur, in quibus ea quae sibi videbantur obscura aut habere aliquid difficultatis summam breviterque perstrinxit. Secundum homileticum genus, de quo et praesens interpretatio est. Tertium quod ipse inscripsit τόμους, nos volumina possumus nuncupare, in quo opere tota ingenii sui vela spirantibus ventis dedit et recedens a terra in medium pelagus aufugit.* This last genre is that of Origen’s commentaries. This does not mean, however, that the public of his homilies was exclusively made up of simple people: “The audience of Origen’s preaching is complex. At certain times the majority is simple Christians, at other times many among the audience are morally and intellectually educated. In most cases, however, the audience probably includes all levels” (Jacobsen, “Christology in the Homilies of Origen,” 642).

death and says as a premise: "I do not know whether I should expose such mysteries before such a public [...] it is *dangerous*." Apokatastasis must be preached to those who are mature enough to do the good out of love and not of fear. Saving repentance/conversion of all creatures in the end, according to Origen's scheme "universal submission = universal salvation," is preached in *Hom. in Luc.* 23: "they came to preach universal conversion to human beings and angels and the other powers, so that 'in the name of Jesus every knee will bend, in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld'" (Phil 2:10–11).

Even in his simplest homilies, Origen is clear that otherworldly punishments will have an end and a precise limit, being commensurate with one's sins: "the *length* of the punishment is *calculated* on the basis of the quality and nature of one's sin." Each one will receive "a different penalty, *according* to the quality and quantity of one's sin." Origen insists a great deal on the exact measure and duration of the punishment of each one, which will last until one has paid his debt "up to the last coin"; then he concludes: "I cannot say with certainty how long we shall remain closed in prison until we have paid our debt. If one who owes a small debt is not let out until one has paid the last coin, certainly for one who owes a very large debt *innumerable aeons will be calculated* for the repayment of his debt," and yet, if they are calculated, they must still have a limit (*Hom. in Luc.* 35).<sup>557</sup> In fact, the notion of aeons itself implies time, which will have an end at the end of time, in the eternity of the eventual apokatastasis. Gregory of Nyssa, as I shall point out, will be reminiscent of Origen's interpretation of the payment of one's debts up to the last coin.

Even in his homilies, moreover, Origen alludes to the eventual *θέωσις* which will be the summit of apokatastasis: "We shall be like God, and see God as God is" [1John 3:2]. You, too, will have to *become God* in Jesus Christ" (*Hom. in Luc.* 29,7). And even in his homilies, in which the recourse to "pagan" philosophy and culture is so reduced, Origen praises Greek culture and approves of Paul's use of it: "If Paul draws an explanation from pagan literature, he will not turn me against his discourse, since Paul borrows expressions *even from what is alien* (pagan), in order to sanctify them" (*Hom.*

<sup>557</sup> It is not accidental that Origen deems the *Shepherd of Hermas* divinely inspired (*Comm. in Rom.* 10,31,3–5: *scriptura valde utilis et [...] divinitus inspirata*). Here, in *Sim.* 6,2, it is stated that those who have sinned in the present life will be tormented in the world to come for the same number of days during which they sinned in this world, although the days of their torment will seem to them to be as long as years. The basic idea is that of a *limited* duration of otherworldly torments.

in *Luc.* 31). This is Origen's own attitude to Greek philosophy, which surfaces even in his less philosophical and learned works.<sup>558</sup>

Apokatastasis is professed by Origen in all of his works, including the simplest, as I have just shown, and the latest. For instance, he widely comments on Rom 11:25–26—which announces the eventual salvation of “the totality of the nations” and “all of Israel”—in the relevant commentary,<sup>559</sup> a work of his maturity which was translated by Rufinus around 405–406 CE. Here, Origen refers vv. 25–26 to the eventual apokatastasis. In *Comm. in Rom.* 7,13, after noting that Paul offered himself as anathema for the salvation of Israel, Origen declares that Paul's prayer was received by the Lord and will be fulfilled in the *telos*, when the totality of the nations will enter and all Israel will be saved. This prophecy of Paul's is particularly important for Origen, who highlights it by means of its reiteration in many other places of his commentary as well, for example in 8,1,1160: *in nouissimis, cum omnis Israhel saluus fiet*, or in 8,9,1185: *illorum enim uel in fine saeculi conuersio erit, tunc cum plenitudo gentium subintrauerit et omnis Israhel saluus fiet*; or again in 8,12,1196: *si ergo pro eo ut introiuerit gentium plenitudo caecitas facta est in Israhel pro omnibus quae fecerunt, sine dubio, cum ingressa fuerit gentium plenitudo, caecitas cessat*, and in 8,9,1184: *uelum capiant etiam ipsi [sc. Israhel] in nouissimis saltem temporibus [...] gentium fides et conuersatio Israheli aemulationem conuersionis conferat et salutis*. In *Comm. in Cant.* 2,1,45 it is even more evident that *plenitudo gentium* for Origen means the totality of the nations, because he adds *omnis*: *Posteaquam intraverit omnis plenitudo gentium, quae fluminibus Aethiopiae comparatur, venient etiam ipsi, et tunc omnis Israhel salvabitur*. The salvation of “all of Israel” is likewise evoked in *Comm. in Cant.* 4,2,22; *Hom. in Ier.* 4,6; *Hom. in Iud.* 5,5–6; *Hom. in Ier.* 5,5.<sup>560</sup>

<sup>558</sup> See Ramelli, “Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism” and “Origen the Christian Middle-Neoplatonist.”

<sup>559</sup> On the mystery of the salvation of the Jews in Origen's Commentary on Romans see Sze-kar Wan in *Early Patristic Readings of Romans*, eds. K. Gaca–L. Welborn (New York–London, 2005); *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, eds. F. Wilk–J. Ross Wagner (Tübingen, 2010). Cf. Th. Heither, *Translatio Religionis. Die Paulus-bedeutung des Origenes in seinem Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Köln, 1990).

<sup>560</sup> *Hom. in Iud.* 5,5–6: *Verum est enim illud quod Apostolus in novissimo tempore dicit futurum quia, cum plenitudo gentium subintroierit, tunc omnis Israhel saluus fiet. [...] In consummatione omnium, id est in fine saeculi, etiam canticum Domino cantabitur per Deborah, in quo primatus quidem dabitur Israhel ecclesiae gentium, nec tamen de Barac [sc. Israhel] laude silebitur, sed unum et primis et novissimis victoriae praemium dabitur*. In *Hom. in Ier.* 5,5 Origen refers the eschatological time of the salvation of Israel to when “all will serve God” (*Zeph* 3:9–10). See also G. Sgherri, *Chiesa e Sinagoga nelle opere di Origenes* (Milan, 1982), 443–444.

Rom 11:25–26 is briefly recalled also in *Fr. in Luc.* 125: “When the totality of the gentiles has entered, then all of Israel will be saved,” and *Hom. in Ex.* 6,9. In *Hom. in Jer.* 5,4–5 Origen comments on Rom 11:26, ascribing to God the salvation of Israel: “the salvation of Israel will take place thanks to God the Lord” (Jer 3:23). Origen even attributes to Moses Paul’s wish and prophecy of the eventual salvation of Israel, in *Hom. in Num.* 7,1: at the Transfiguration, Moses spoke with Jesus asking him that, “after the entrance of the totality of the nations, all of Israel might be saved.” Origen is equally clear that the salvation of Israel and all gentiles alike will take place through faith: Abraham will inherit the whole world (*totius mundi*) because all will be made just by their faith: *per iustitiam fidei*.<sup>561</sup> All will be saved because all will come to believe.

Indeed, Origen’s apokatastasis theory developed from Christian antecedents, which I have already analysed. As I have mentioned in the introductory section to the present monograph, in *Comm. in Io.* 1,16,91 Origen reveals that he relies on an already existing tradition when he says: “The end [τέλος] is in the so-called apokatastasis [τῇ λεγομένῃ ἀποκαταστάσει]” and then cites 1 Cor 15:24–28. The tradition to which he refers was not only one that possessed the idea of apokatastasis without the word itself—as it is the case with the *Apocalypse of Peter* and Bardaisan—nor one that had the word but in a meaning that was totally different from that of “apokatastasis” in Origen—as is the case with the Stoic (pagan) notion of apokatastasis, which Origen criticised—, but a *Christian* tradition that had both the *idea* and the *word*. Origen is thinking of Acts 3:21, and probably also of Pantaenus and Clement who expressly identified the *telos* with apokatastasis. That Origen had this in mind is confirmed by several passages of his in which he comments on this verse and which I have already cited in the initial sections of this monograph. In particular, in *Princ.* 2,3,5 Origen interprets ἀποκατάστασις πάντων in Acts 3:20–21 as the “perfect τέλος” at the end of all aeons. The same interpretation of the same passage in reference to the final universal restoration is supplied in *Comm. in Matt.* 17,19, where he observes that in the end “we shall see God as God is,” and this *telos* will be the final apokatastasis. In Origen’s view, the apokatastasis theory is deeply rooted *in the Bible*.

For Origen, indeed, all of the theoretical pillars of the doctrine of apokatastasis are found in Scripture. For instance, the idea—which I have illustrated beforehand—that apokatastasis results from illumination, education, and

<sup>561</sup> Faith is necessary and sufficient to salvation. See *Princ.* 2,6,7; CC 6,13; *Comm. in Rom.* 3, 9; 9,38; *Dial.* 19.

perfection in knowledge, is, to be sure, a philosophical idea and has much of Plato's tradition in it, but Origen primarily grounds it in 1Tim 2:4–6: “God wants all human beings to be saved and to reach the knowledge of Truth.” Moreover, this depends on Christ's being Truth itself, the Logos, and Wisdom. The ontological non-existence of evil and its eventual disappearance in apokatastasis is rooted, as I have demonstrated, not only in the same metaphysical presupposition as in Platonism, but also in the Bible, especially 1Cor 15:24–28 and the *Apocalypse of John*. Likewise, the idea of apokatastasis as a return to harmony and unity in God rests, not only upon a Platonic principle,<sup>562</sup> but upon Jesus's prayer for unity in John 17, which is constantly quoted or referred to by Origen.<sup>563</sup> Also, the notion—which I have already analysed—of Christ-Logos or God as Physician, who will heal all rational creatures, besides having a basis in the traditional conception of philosophy as therapy for the soul, is also rooted in the NT, especially Matt 9:12, and more generally in Jesus's healing activity. This, in Origen's view, happened historically—miracles really took place—, but it is also interpreted spiritually as the healing of souls from evil. Similarly, the notion of apokatastasis as the full recovery of the pure image of God in every human being, after the removal of the dirtiness of sin, and the attainment of the assimilation to God, which I have already illustrated, is not only inspired by Plato's doctrine of ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ, but first and foremost it is grounded in the Biblical doctrine of the so-called “theology of the image,” which in Origen's opinion inspired Plato in turn. Moreover, an influence from Philo and his doctrine of the apokatastasis of the soul is also to be taken into account.

While the Biblical model was appropriated, the Stoic “pagan” model of apokatastasis was rather criticised by Origen, as well as the “Gnostic” model, which was rejected by him in that it was, as I have already shown, not holistic and not universal, in that it excluded the resurrection of the body and at least one class of humans from restoration. On the contrary, Origen not only extended apokatastasis to all humans and all rational creatures, and even the whole creation, but also assimilated it to the *anastasis*, a Jewish and Christian doctrine (an assimilation that will be taken over and elaborated by Gregory of Nyssa). Thus, he speaks of apokatastasis in reference to Jesus's resurrection (*Comm. in Io.* 20,11) or Lazarus's (*ibid.* 18,6). Origen describes apokatastasis as “the perfection of the resurrection” (*ibid.* 10,37),

<sup>562</sup> See my “Harmony.”

<sup>563</sup> E.g., *Princ.* 3,6,4; 3,6,6; *Comm. in Io.* 1,16; *Comm. in Matt.* 10,2; *Fr. in Ier.* 28; *Comm. in Cant.* 1, GCS 8,103.

when Christ will be with the Father, and thereby God will be “all in all.” Origen’s doctrine of apokatastasis was indeed developed precisely on the basis of his aforementioned polemic against “Gnostic” predestinationism and the “Gnostic” and Marcionite separation between the OT and the NT and between justice and mercy in God. As I have mentioned, I think that the doctrine of human free will was at the basis of Origen’s apokatastasis theory, as is manifest in *Princ.* 3.<sup>564</sup> In this book he begins with criticising the “Valentinian” threefold division of humanity into ὕλικοί, ψυχικοί, and πνευματικοί, predestined to damnation or salvation. He argues that, on the contrary, Scripture teaches everywhere the doctrine of free will, and shows that Scripture itself is a coherent whole, against the “Gnostic” and Marcionite distinction between the OT and the NT and between God’s justice and goodness. This is the theoretical premise—grounded in theodicy—for his theory of the restoration of all *logika* after their purification and illumination, a theory that satisfies the requirements of both God’s goodness and God’s justice. This theory forms the conclusion of this closely knit and consistent book, which is devoted to the development of one argument, from the polemic against predestinationism and the division between God’s justice and mercy to the eventual universal restoration. This book thus provides a clear “radiography” of the reasons that induced Origen to build up his argument for apokatastasis. The latter, far from contradicting human free will, is rather grounded in theodicy—the defence of God’s justice and goodness—and in Origen’s defence of free will against predestination. This was caught very well by the perspicacious Rufinus, who remarked that the supporters of apokatastasis, especially Origen, aimed at

*Dei iustitiam defendere et respondere contra eos qui vel fato vel casu cuncta moveri dicunt [...] Dei iustitiam defendere cupientes [...] bonae illi et incommutabili ac simplici naturae Trinitatis convenire ut omnem creaturam suam in fine omnium restituat in hoc quod ex initio creata est et post longa et spatiis saeculorum exaequata supplicia finem statuatur aliquando poenarum.*

(*Apol. c. Hier.*, 2,12)

It seems to me that Rufinus perfectly grasped, and even echoed, Origen’s motivations for the construction of his apokatastasis theory, and more particularly his declaration in *Princ.* 3,5,5:

Nobody but God the Creator of the universe can calculate and *order* each one’s merits and at the same time *restore all to one end*, taking into account the various falls and progressions, rewarding virtue and punishing sins, both now

<sup>564</sup> See Ramelli, “La coerenza.”



and in the future aeon and in all worlds, before and after. God only knows the reason why he allows some to follow their own will and fall [...] whereas he begins to assist others little by little, almost leading them by hand, and restores them to their original condition, placing them on high. Some, having misunderstood this, unable to grasp that the variety of this disposition has been established by God on the basis of previous causes due to the use of free will, *have believed that all that which happens in the world is determined by fortuitous events or fatalistic necessity* and nothing depends on our free will.

Hence Rufinus's *vel fato vel casu cuncta moveri*, and his right deduction that theodicy was Origen's main concern, in the framework of his polemic against "Gnostic" determinism. It is notable that likewise Gregory of Nyssa, especially in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, maintained the same doctrine of apokatastasis against subordinationism—in his day, a "Neo-Arian" doctrine, which moreover, as I have demonstrated thoroughly elsewhere, he countered using an argument drawn directly from Origen.<sup>565</sup> He closely related anti-subordinationism to the argument for universal apokatastasis. Therefore, it results that both Origen and Gregory upheld the apokatastasis theory within the direct framework of their polemic against their day's "heretics" ("Gnostics," subordinationists, "Arians"), and as an anti-heretical doctrine. Both of them, furthermore, firmly grounded this doctrine in Christ. There is no apokatastasis without Christ.

Origen, indeed, was a *Christian* Platonist.<sup>566</sup> His "anti-Platonism"—highlighted especially by Mark Edwards and Panayiotis Tzamalikos with several right remarks<sup>567</sup>—must be qualified. I think he was against *pagan* Platonism and *Gnostic* Platonism; indeed, that "Gnostics," and especially Valentinians, were inspired by Platonism—and Pythagoreanism—was a claim made already by Irenaeus (*AH* 2,14,3–4; 2,33,2), Tertullian (*De carne Chr.* 20), and particularly Hippolytus (*Ref.* 6,21–22.29.37.*prae*f.).<sup>568</sup> If Origen opposed

<sup>565</sup> See my "*In illud*" and "The Trinitarian Theology." On Gregory's *In illud* see also J. Tóth, "Interpretation and Argumentation in *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*," in *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology*, 427–443.

<sup>566</sup> Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy," and "Origen the Christian Middle-Neoplatonist"; O'Leary, *Christianisme et philosophie*, with my review.

<sup>567</sup> Esp. Edwards in *Origen against Plato*; in "Origen's Platonism. Questions and Caveats," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 12 (2008) 20–38; and then more marginally in *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (Farnham, 2009), 79–104; Tzamalikos, *Ontology of Time and Philosophy of History*; his lecture at the Workshop on *The Soul in the Origenian Tradition* at the Oxford Patristics Conference, August 2011.

<sup>568</sup> On Valentinus's Platonism see at least M.J. Edwards, "Pauline Platonism: The Myth of Valentinus," in *Studia Patristica XXXV*, eds. M.F. Wiles–E.J. Yarnold (Leuven, 2001), 205–221, also with further references.

Gnostic, as well as pagan, Platonism it is precisely because he intended to construct an “*orthodox*” Christian Platonism, against “Gnosticism,” Marcionism, and “paganism.” Of course he would reject doctrines such as that of metempsychosis, which was incompatible with the Bible and in fact was supported by Plato himself only in a mythical form, while “pagan” Platonism supported it in a theoretical and dogmatic form—and this is what both Origen and Gregory Nyssen countered.<sup>569</sup> This is why Origen never stopped teaching philosophy and valued philosophy for instance in *Comm. in Cant.* 2,1,28: the queen of Saba, who represents the “pagans,” brought gold with her, which represents philosophy, regarded as most valuable.<sup>570</sup> Even in his homilies Origen also acknowledges the philosophers’ temperance and wisdom (*Hom. in Ier.* 5,4).<sup>571</sup>

Eusebius used an excellent source for his biographical information on Origen in *HE* 6: Pamphilus, both orally and from the Apology he composed with him, whose Books 2–6 were devoted to Origen’s life and intellectual figure (doctrinal problems were treated in Book 1, the sole that survived, in translation). Moreover, Eusebius had Origen’s letters at his disposal. The only doubts one can have regarding his information must bear, not on the quality of Eusebius’s sources, but on his own, and Pamphilus’s, apologetic agenda. This is why, for example, I would not doubt that Origen did mutilate himself, since Eusebius (and Pamphilus) admitted this, although with clear embarrassment, and endeavoured to excuse this, which was very probably already an object of the polemics of Pamphilus’s adversaries. But I would doubt, for instance, Origen’s Christian birth, since this was stressed by Eusebius for apologetic reasons, and his very calling Leonidas “Origen’s λεγόμενος πατήρ” raises doubts.<sup>572</sup> For this and many other reasons I have expressed

<sup>569</sup> I. Ramelli, “Preexistence of Souls? The ἀρχή and τέλος of Rational Creatures in Origen and some Origenians,” lecture at the Workshop on *The Soul in the Origenian Tradition* at the Oxford Patristics Conference, August 2011, in *Studia Patristica* LIV, ed. M. Vinzent (Leuven, 2012), 1–60.

<sup>570</sup> *Auro venit repleta, sensibus sine dubio et rationalibus disciplinis, quas ante fidem adhuc ex communi hac et scholari eruditione collegerat.* The real problem with “pagan” philosophy is that even the best of it was unable to remove sin (*Comm. in Cant.* 2,5,30: *permanserunt peccatores et nullum peccantibus remedium providere potuerint*), because to this end the grace of God is indispensable, and this can be found not in “pagan” but in Christian Platonism.

<sup>571</sup> Περιτέμνονται τὰ ἦθη καὶ τὴν καρδίαν ὥς τε εἰπεῖν σωφρονίζουσι οἱ φιλοσοφούντες.

<sup>572</sup> See my “Origen, Patristic Philosophy.” As for the passages of Origen himself that may suggest a conversion from “paganism,” besides those I adduced in the above-mentioned article, one may wonder whether there is a hint in *Princ.* 4,1,1–5 as well, also reported by Pamphilus *Apol.* 84: *uicti enim nos sumus et superati qui ex gentibus sumus*, and esp. in *Hom. in Ier.* 4,2, where Origen speaks in the singular: Πόθεν γὰρ ἐμοί, τῷ ὁπουποτοῦν γενομένῳ ξένῳ τῆς λεγομένης ἀγίας γῆς, νῦν περὶ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν λέγεσθαι τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ πιστεῦειν εἰς τὸν Θεὸν τῶν

the suspicion that Origen, as Porphyry and Marcellus of Ancyra contended, might indeed have been initially a “pagan” who then converted to Christianity (albeit Porphyry’s and Marcellus’s testimonies are of course even more biased than Eusebius’s and, as I warned, must be assessed critically). Our Origen may even be identifiable with the Neoplatonist of whom Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus speak; there is much to support this hypothesis.<sup>573</sup>

At any rate, Origen definitely was, or became, a Christian, and his Platonism is Christian to the point that his thought is grounded in the Bible first and in Plato after—also because in his view it was Plato who was inspired by the Bible.<sup>574</sup> This is expressed especially clearly in *Comm. in Cant.* prol. 3,2–4, where Origen, after speaking of the division of philosophy into *ethica*, *physica*, *epoptica*, and *logica*, first posits *epoptica* as the crowning of philosophy—thus regarding theology (*epoptica* = *de divinis et caelestibus*) as part and parcel of philosophy and making clear that theology cannot be studied alone, without philosophical bases—and then states that Greek philosophers drew inspiration from Solomon’s wisdom.<sup>575</sup> Hence the priority of the Bible, but also the inevitable affinity between the teaching of Scripture and that of Plato. Origen found in Scripture a number of philosophical doctrines, primarily Platonic, but also more generically Greek, beginning with the γνῶθι σεαυτόν, which, he maintains, was known to Solomon way before being enunciated by the Seven Wise Men of Greece.<sup>576</sup> The

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πατριαρχῶν, καὶ Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν [...] παραδέχεσθαι; Ibid. 5,2–3 Origen speaks for those Christians who came from paganism, οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑθνῶν, saying: instead of serving God, we were enslaved to demons (idols); now that we have turned to God, “we condemn the errors of the past” (ἡμεῖς καταγνόντες τῶν προτέρων), with reference to “the idols worshipped by the pagans” (τὰ προσκυνούμενα παρὰ τοῖς ἔθνεσι). Ibid. 5,5 he puts himself again among former pagans: “We confess the sins in which both our fathers and we ourselves had been when we worshipped the idols,” ἐξομολογούντες περὶ τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων ἐν οἷς καὶ οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν γεγόνασι καὶ ἡμεῖς αὐτοὶ εἰδωλολατρῶντες.

<sup>573</sup> See my “Origen the Middle-Neoplatonist” and “Origen and the Symbolic Meaning of Plato’s Dialogues,” forthcoming.

<sup>574</sup> On this theme in Hellenistic Judaism and Christian apologetics see at least A.J. Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture* (Tübingen, 1989) and D. Ridings, *The Attic Moses: The Dependency Theme in some Early Christian Writers* (Gothenburg, 1995).

<sup>575</sup> *Haec ergo, ut mihi videtur, sapientes quique Graecorum sumpta a Solomone, utpote qui aetate et tempore longe ante ipsos prior ea per Dei spiritum didicisset, tamquam propria inventa protulerunt, et institutionum suarum voluminibus comprehensa posteris quoque tradenda reliquere. Sed haec, ut diximus, Solomon ante omnes invenit, et docuit per sapientiam quam accepit a Deo.*

<sup>576</sup> *Comm. in Cant.* 2,5,6: Christ in Scripture *summam salutis et beatitudinis in scientia (sui) et agnitione constituit*. Origen himself remarks that Cant 1:8 expresses exactly the same

doctrine of apokatastasis is one of the best examples of this communality of ground between the Bible and Greek philosophy, especially Platonism: as I have pointed out, most of its premises are based on both Scripture and Platonism. But Origen notably adduces *Scripture* to buttress it, and feels the need to “correct” Plato on his point concerning some ἀνίατοι souls by having recourse to the (Biblical) omnipotence of Christ-God, Creator and Physician, in order to support universal restoration and salvation: *Nihil enim Omnipotenti impossibile est, nec insanabile est aliquid Factori suo* (*Princ.* 3,6,5).<sup>577</sup>

*The Dialogue of Adamantius and the  
Passages on Apokatastasis Censured in Greek*

The *Dialogue of Adamantius on the Orthodox Faith in God*<sup>578</sup> is a mysterious and still dramatically understudied work; it depicts Adamantius (Origen's byname) as a champion of the orthodox faith engaged in a discussion with several “heretics,” from Marcionites to “Valentinians” to Bardaisanites. Since

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injunction as one of the Seven Sages did: *Nisi cognoveris te, o bona, sive pulchra, inter mulieres [...] unius ex septem, quos apud Graecos singulares in sapientia fuisse fama concelebrat, haec inter caetera mirabilis fertur esse sententia, qua ait: Scito te ipsum, vel Cognosce te ipsum* (*Comm. in Cant.* 2,5,1).

<sup>577</sup> This argument of God's omnipotence, however, is not absolute and anti-Platonic: in CC 5,23 Origen precisely rejects Celsus's accusation (CC 5,14) that the Christians have recourse to the ἀτοπωτάτη ἀναχώρησις of God's omnipotence, because, Origen explains, when he claims that everything is possible to God, he understands “everything” without including in it what does not exist and what is inconceivable. God cannot do anything evil, otherwise God would not be God. God wants nothing contrary to nature, nothing evil, nothing contrary to the logos. This point was especially sensitive for Porphyry as well, who was acquainted with Origen's work. In fragments from his work against the Christians preserved by Didymus (*Comm. in Iob* 3,7–11) and by Macarius (*Apocr.* 4,24) Porphyry insisted that there are things that are impossible even for God, e.g. the resurrection of bodies. On Porphyry's work against the Christians I limit myself to referring to a recent book with a good *status quaestionis*: S. Morlet (éd.), *Le traité de Porphyre contre les chrétiens. Un siècle de recherches, nouvelles questions* (Paris, 2011).

<sup>578</sup> Ed. of the Greek: *Der Dialog des Adamantius Περὶ τῆς εἰς θεὸν ὁρθῆς πίστεως*, ed. W.H. van de Sande Bakhuyzen (Leipzig, 1901). Ed. of Rufinus's translation: V. Buchheit, *Tyranni Rufini Librorum Adamantii Origenis adversus haereticos interpretatio* (München, 1966); a new critical edition is forthcoming in Oxford. A translation is provided by R.A. Pretty, *Dialogue on the True Faith in God* (Leuven, 1997). No monograph is devoted to it as yet, and the only commentary on it covers only the first two books and focuses exclusively on heresiological themes and on the sections of Adamantius's adversaries: K. Tsutsui, *Die Auseinandersetzung mit den Markioniten im Adamantios-Dialog: ein Kommentar zu den Büchern I–II* (Berlin–New York, 2004).

I have devoted two substantial essays to it,<sup>579</sup> and a new critical edition and a commentary are being prepared, here, after briefly presenting the main problems surrounding this work, I shall limit myself to focussing on the issue of apokatastasis in it. This treatment will be all the more important in this connection, in that what Adamantius maintains corresponds (contrary to what has been claimed) to Origen's authentic thought.<sup>580</sup>

This *Dialogue* is usually thought to have been composed in Greek by a follower of Methodius, but it was ascribed to Origen by the compilers of the *Philocalia*, who call it *Dialogue of Origen against the Marcionites and Other Heretics*,<sup>581</sup> and then by Rufinus, who translated it into Latin. Rufinus's version is grounded in a Greek *Vorlage* that is different from the extant Greek and, as I suspect, closer to the original.<sup>582</sup> A passage in the *Dialogue of Adamantius* is almost identical to a section of Methodius's *On Free Will*. Eusebius, however (*PE* 7,22), ascribes this same excerpt to a work *On Matter* by a "Maximus" who wrote under Commodus and Septimius Severus (*HE* 5,26,1). The Cappadocians in *Philoc.* 24 rightly notice a close correspondence between Eusebius's excerpt and a passage in the *Dialogue of Adamantius*. I have argued elsewhere that Eusebius's reference to "Maximus" might indicate an influence from Maximus of Tyre, who was a contemporary of Eusebius's "Maximus" and treated the same questions. Eusebius might have drawn Maximus's material from Origen, who might have been himself acquainted with Maximus's thought.<sup>583</sup> This—which is made more probable by Evagrius's interest in Maximus of Tyre, especially in regard to prayer<sup>584</sup>—could explain the reason why the same stuff is present both in Methodius and in the *Dialogue*. For it is not at all granted that the *Dialogue* depends on Methodius, as it is commonly assumed; it may be that

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<sup>579</sup> "‘Maximus’ on Evil, Matter, and God: Arguments for the Identification of the Source of Eusebius *PE* VII 22," *Adamantius* 16 (2010) 230–255; "The *Dialogue of Adamantius* as a Document."

<sup>580</sup> Extensive demonstration in my "The *Dialogue of Adamantius* as a Document," also with refutations of the claims that Adamantius's ideas on many points diverge from Origen's.

<sup>581</sup> Anastasius of Sinai and the *Praedestinatus* will also consider this dialogue as a dialogue of Origen's. Anastasius uses a part of it (818d–819b) in *Quaest.* 48, presenting it as a work of Origen. In *Praed.* 21 it is attested that *Marcionitae, cum universalem orientis ecclesiam macularent, ab Origene superati, confutati, et per singulas sunt civitates damnati.*

<sup>582</sup> Thorough linguistic and philological argument in my "The *Dialogue of Adamantius* as a Document."

<sup>583</sup> "‘Maximus’ on Evil, Matter, and God."

<sup>584</sup> On Maximus's treatment see P.W. van der Horst, "Maximus of Tyre on Prayer," in *Geschichte, Tradition, Reflexion, Festschrift M. Hengel*, 2, ed. H. Cancik et al. (Tübingen, 1996), 323–338.

Methodius depends on the *Dialogue*,<sup>585</sup> which, in its original Greek redaction, might be earlier than Methodius. This could help to clarify how the same material is present under Maximus's name in Eusebius and under Origen's in the *Dialogue* and the *Philocalia*, in addition to Methodius. The latter perhaps based himself, not on Eusebius, but on the original Greek redaction or source of the *Dialogue of Adamantius*. This might even result from one of the public debates that Origen held in his maturity, or from the reworking of Origen's authentic thoughts into such a frame.

The Greek dialogue, available to the Cappadocians, was translated into Latin by Rufinus, who thus transmitted a redaction that, in spite of being a translation, seems to me to be closer to the original than the extant Greek. For the latter is much later, contains references to the age after Constantine and, what is more, Byzantinisms, besides strategic deletions, interpolations, and modifications, as I hope to have proved.<sup>586</sup> The same seems to be the case with the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*,<sup>587</sup> which was composed in Greek around 395 CE and was translated into Latin by Rufinus; while it was commonly assumed that the translation differs from the extant Greek because Rufinus altered his *Vorlage*—what is also assumed in the case of our *Dialogue*—in order to describe the Egyptian monks as Origenians, now, thanks to comparisons with Sozomen and the Syriac recensions,<sup>588</sup> it is clear that Rufinus translated faithfully the original Greek *Historia* and it is the extant Greek text that reveals alterations, deletions, and additions. I suspect that exactly the same happened with our *Dialogue*. In the *Historia*, as in the *Dialogue*, the passages that have disappeared in the later Greek are all related to Origenism.<sup>589</sup> Another eloquent example of how passages

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<sup>585</sup> T. Barnes, "Methodius, Maximus, and Valentinus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1979) 47–55 accepts the assumption that Eusebius is in fact quoting Methodius.

<sup>586</sup> "The *Dialogue of Adamantius* as a Document."

<sup>587</sup> Edition of the extant Greek: A.-J. Festugière, *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* (Bruxelles, 1971); edition of Rufinus's version: E. Schultz-Flügel, *Tyrannii Rufini Historia monachorum* (Berlin–New York, 1990).

<sup>588</sup> Sozomen knows passages that are present in Rufinus but absent in the extant Greek text, which means that they were present in Rufinus's *Vorlage* and not invented by Rufinus. See C.P. Bammel, "Problems of the *Historia Monachorum*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 47 (1996) 92–104. The Syriac recensions confirm Rufinus's anteriority to the extant Greek according to P. Tóth, "Lost in Translation: An Evagrian Term in the Different Versions of the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*," in *Origeniana IX*, ed. G. Heidl–R. Somos (Leuven, 2009), 613–621.

<sup>589</sup> This is why Bammel, "Problems," 99 concluded that "the Greek has undergone a clumsy and incompetent revision as a result of fear of Origenism."

including the doctrine of apokatastasis were deleted from the manuscript tradition is John the Scot Eriugena's translation of Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*, in which the doctrine of apokatastasis is well present.<sup>590</sup>

The most relevant to the present investigation are the expunctions, in the extant Greek of the *Dialogue*, of passages that expounded the doctrine of apokatastasis. In the extant Greek, 848e, a long section concerning this doctrine is totally absent, but it is present in Rufinus's Latin. Here, a veritable compendium of Origen's soteriology and eschatology is provided, including the negation of a definitive perdition, the interest in all rational creatures (and not only human beings), the supreme importance of free will, the notion of this world as a means to regain the original condition that was lost at the beginning due to sin, and the reading of the parable of the lost sheep in reference to the doctrine of restoration:

Si labitur quis et decidat, a *diuina eius prouidentia nusquam prorsus abscedat, nec omnino aliquid sit quod illi penitus pereat*. Et super omnia adhuc illud uidendum est, quod ad cunctam rationabilem naturam quanta et quam minima pars homo est, qui similiter ut ceterae omnes rationabiles naturae arbitrii libertate donatus est, qui tamen uelut ouis errans per ignorantiae montes et colles boni pastoris humeris reportatus est et *restitutus est* ad illas nonaginta et nouem oues quae non errauerunt.

Quid ergo tibi uidetur, qui hoc ita sentis? Ne una erraret ouicula, nonaginta et nouem ouium profectus et gloria debuit impediri? Impeditum namque fuerat, si naturae rationabili libertas arbitrii, per quam illae nonaginta et nouem in summis excelsis profectibus permanserunt, non fuisset indulta, quandoquidem nec eorum qui quo modo oberrauerant *salutem dispensatio diuina* despexerit, sed stadium quoddam praesentem hunc et uisibilem mundum posuerit, in quo, concertantium et aduersantium agone moderato, certaminis praemia proposuerit *regressum ad pristinum statum*, dum per arbitrii libertatem quae illuc ducunt eligi et nihilominus et respui quae non sinunt possunt.<sup>591</sup>

Rather than thinking that Rufinus added this passage—in all of his translations of Origen, he never adds anything apart from tiny and merely explicative glosses, but he often cuts, for instance long philological or philosophical discussions—, I deem it more probable that the Greek *Vorlage* known to Rufinus included it, and that it was expurgated afterwards in the extant Greek text because of the purported condemnation of the doctrine of

<sup>590</sup> To this I shall return below, Ch. 4, section on Eriugena.

<sup>591</sup> I quote the text of the *Dialogue* according to the above-mentioned new critical edition in preparation.

apokatastasis under Justinian.<sup>592</sup> Indeed, soon afterwards (849a) Adamantius is declared to have expressed the orthodox position; therefore, the post-Justinian Greek readers could not conceive of an orthodox thinker who embraced the apokatastasis doctrine. Consequently, that section had to be dropped. But to Rufinus, the passage at stake was no cause for embarrassment, given that he did not at all deem Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis unorthodox. Adamantius's remark that apokatastasis, the restoration into the original condition, *regressum ad pristinum statum*, is the reward for the agonistic engagement of virtue (*certaminis praemia*) is not the sign of a detachment from Origen's positions, but corresponds to what Origen himself observed in *Comm. in Io.* 13.46.299. And the joining of *agon* and *certamina* for depicting this world as a place of exercise aimed at the ultimate end in Adamantius's words exactly corresponds to Origen *Hom. in Gen.* 16,7: *in carne positi agones mundi huius et certamina sustinemus*.

The syntagm *regressum ad pristinum statum* in Rufinus's text of the *Dialogue* renders an original Greek τὴν εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκατάστασιν. This expression is typical of Origen, also in its verbal correspondent (εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαθίστημι), and was taken over by Gregory of Nyssa. Jerome's and Rufinus's translations of Origen's phrases are the same as in the *Dialogue of Adamantius*: *reuertere ad pristinum statum* (Jerome, *Ep. ad Avit.* 3), *restituere in statum initii sui* (*Princ.* 2,1,1), *restituere in huiuscemodi statum* (*Princ.* 3,6,6), *redire ad statum suum ac rursum statui* (*Princ.* 1,3,8), and *redire et restitui ad statum suae beatitudinis* (*Princ.* 1,6,2), *consummatio et restitutio omnium* (*Princ.* 3,6,9), and *perfecta uniuersae creaturae restitutio* (*Princ.* 3,5,7). Also, Adamantius refers to the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3–7) as an example of Jesus's action of restoration. Origen too referred the same parable to apokatastasis, in that it is operated by Christ (e.g. in *Fr. in Ps.* 118, 176; *Fr. in Jer.* fr. 28; *Fr. in Ps.* 18,6; *Sel. in Ps.* PG 12,1628).

In 856e, nine lines in the Latin, regarding, again, the doctrine of apokatastasis have no correspondence in the extant Greek. Adamantius in these lines, drawing on two quotations from Paul (1 Cor 15:47) and Genesis (2:7) that are also absent from the extant Greek, expresses the theory of apokatastasis as restoration of God's image in humanity. His words in the Latin text are absolutely coherent with what Adamantius has previously said, whereas in the extant Greek there is a patent logical gap. The last statement that has a correspondence in the extant Greek is Adamantius's *Per Adam mors, per*

<sup>592</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on Justinian.



*Christum resurrectio incohata est.* What follows these words has no longer any correspondence in the Greek text now available to us, but it is the natural development of the preceding sentence:

Primus homo de terra terrenum, secundus homo de coelo. Sed sicut iste qui terrenus dicitur non potuisset homo dici, nisi fuisset coelitus inspiratus (insufflauit enim deus in faciem eius spiritum uitae, et factus est homo in animam uiuentem), ita et iste, qui de coelo dicitur, homo dici non posset, nisi uerbo coelesti caro sociaretur humana, ut, sicut tunc ille terrenus suscepit imaginem deitatis, ita et nunc iste coelestis susciperet humanitatis imaginem, ut, cum in eo nostra fuisset *imago reparata*, ita demum et ipsius *imago restitueretur in nobis*.

This notion coincides with Origen's association of the so-called theology of the image with the doctrine of apokatastasis, and with his insistence on the Adam-Christ parallel, in his Commentary on Romans and elsewhere. Like Adamantius here, Origen also thought that Christ's incarnation allows for the restoration of the image of God in human beings, after its disfigurement by sin.<sup>593</sup> Adamantius's idea that God had to take up humanity in order for humanity to enjoy *θέωσις* entirely corresponds to Origen's concept (which appears again in Athanasius and others).

Adamantius shares with Origen another fundamental doctrine, which also bears on the theory of apokatastasis: that of the ontological non-subsistence of evil. In 846c the origin and the ontological status of evil is described by Adamantius in the very same way as Origen described it:

mala neque secundum naturam *neque secundum substantiam*, sed ex animi proposito fiunt et *ex arbitrii libertate* aut in actibus aut in uoluntatibus inueniuntur. Non ergo quis malus est ex eo quod est, sed ex eo quod agit, et ita inueniuntur mala non esse *substantiae* sed substantiis accidentia [...] per arbitrii libertatem.

This coincides with Origen's argument against "Valentinianism": rational creatures are not evil by nature, but they can become so as a consequence of the exercise of their free will. Not only Adamantius's claim that evil has no ontological subsistence, but also his statement that free will is a gift of God to humanity (848c) coincides with Origen's view. What Adamantius adds, that this gift was given to humanity in order for human beings to choose what is good out of love and not by necessity, perfectly corresponds to Origen's thought as well:

<sup>593</sup> See below, Ch. 3, section on Gregory Nyssen.

in qua uelint parte obtemperandi sibi facultate concessa, cum *sponte se subdiderint Dei legibus*, et non naturali necessitate constricti, sed *amore eius prouocati, imitatione Dei deligant meliora* [...] idcirco ergo concessa est eis libertas arbitrii, ut ad meliora se latius possint extendere et *remunerationem obedientiae* promereri.

Both Adamantius and Origen, qua supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis, are convinced that all will ultimately choose the Good voluntarily, out of love, and thus deserve the “reward of obedience.” Adamantius’s subsequent comment that, if human beings had not received free will, they would be like inanimate things, such as elements,<sup>594</sup> is virtually identical to Bardaisan’s argument in the *Liber legum regionum*.<sup>595</sup> And Bardaisan too was a supporter of universal apokatastasis in the framework of an anti-deterministic polemic, as I have already shown. Whoever he was, it seems very likely that the author of the *Dialogue of Adamantius* as well was a supporter of this doctrine, and in a form that was close to Origen’s.

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<sup>594</sup> *Si enim ita factus fuisset homo rationabilis ut est unum aliquod ex elementis, uerbi gratia ut est aqua uel terra, quae nihil aliud potest esse quam hoc quod est, id est quae neque in melius proficere neque in deterius labi potest, nihil utique homo uel actuum suorum uel propositi gratiae haberet ac muneris, ubi non industriae officium sed uis naturae sola subsisteret.*

<sup>595</sup> “God has glorified the human being over many creatures, and has made it equal to angels. Look at the sun, the moon, the starred sky [...] and see that *free will* is not granted them upon themselves, but they are all fixed in the command of having to do all they are ordered to do [...] [examples follow: heavenly bodies, earth, sea, etc.] Therefore it will become clear to you that God’s goodness has been great toward the human being, who has been gifted with *free will* more than all these *elements* of which we have spoken.” Tr. mine, from the edition, with supporting essays, of the *Liber* forthcoming in Tübingen.



## CHAPTER TWO

### ORIGEN'S FIRST FOLLOWERS IN ALEXANDRIA AND THE EAST, AND HIS FIRST "DETRACTORS"

Εἴτα τὸ τέλος· [...] ὁ Θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πάσι.

Then there will come the end: [...] God  
will be all in all.

(St. Paul, 1 Cor 15:28)

#### *Theognostus, Pierius, Hieracas, St. Anthony, and the Apokatastasis Doctrine*

Among the most devoted followers of Origen in Alexandria are Theognostus and Pierius, who both directed the Didaskaleion. Theognostus did so during the years 265–280; Pierius was his successor. Theognostus's seven books of *Hypotyposeis* closely followed Origen's doctrine, including his theory of apokatastasis, but they are lost, and only partially recoverable thanks to a description of Photius.<sup>1</sup> In Cod. 106 p. 86b–87a Photius textually writes: "Seven books by Theognostus of Alexandria were read: their title was, *Hypotyposeis of the Blessed Exegete Theognostus of Alexandria*." In Book 1 Theognostus dealt with God the Father and disproved the preexistence of a matter coeternal with God (κατὰ τῶν ὑποτιθέντων συναΐδιον ὕλην τῷ Θεῷ). The coeternity of matter with God, indeed, was also denied by Origen himself and by Adamantius in the *Dialogue of Adamantius*.<sup>2</sup> In Book 2 Theognostus, according to Photius, described the Son as a creature (κτίσμα). Origen too was accused of this and of being a precursor of Arianism.<sup>3</sup> Theognostus

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<sup>1</sup> See G. Anesi, "La notizia di Fozio sulle *Hypotyposeis* di Teognosto," *Augustinianum* 21 (1981) 491–516, who offers especially a comparison with Origen, and E. Prinzivalli, *Magister Ecclesiae* (Rome, 2002), 72–73.

<sup>2</sup> See my "The Dialogue of Adamantius: A Document of Origen's Thought? Part One," in *Studia Patristica* LII, eds. A. Brent–M. Vinzent (Leuven, 2012), 71–98; "Part Two," in *Studia Patristica* LIV, ed. M. Vinzent (Leuven, 2012), 1–48. Further proofs will be adduced in a future book.

<sup>3</sup> I. Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism and its Heritage in the Nicene and Capadocian Line," *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011) 21–49, thoroughly demonstrates the falsity of such claims.

thought that the Son, qua Logos, only presides over rational creatures (τῶν λογικῶν μόνων ἐπιστατεῖν). Origen, indeed, thought that the Father presides over all creatures; the Son-Logos over rational creatures, and the Spirit, qua sanctifier, over sanctified rational creatures. According to Photius's account, Theognostus added other notions similar to those of Origen concerning the Son and followed Origen's zetetic method (ἐν γυμνασίας λόγῳ καὶ οὐ δόξης ταῦτα προτιθείς), which was highlighted by Athanasius as well. Theognostus defended Origen in his work (ἀπολογία, συνηγορία). In Book 3 Theognostus treated of the Spirit following Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν. In Book 4 he treated the *logika*, angels and demons, endowed with fine and light bodies (λεπτά). This is perfectly in line with Origen's conception that only the Trinity is entirely free of body. Books 5 and 6 treated of the "inhumanation" of the Son (ἐνανθρώπησις). Book 7 was entitled, *On God's Work as a Creator*; in Photius's view, it was more orthodox (εὐσεβέστερον) than the others. A scholium in a tenth-century manuscript mentions a lost treatise Περὶ ἐνσωματώσεως by Theognostus.<sup>4</sup>

It is meaningful that Athanasius, an estimator of Origen and Didymus, praised Theognostus, too, along with Origen.<sup>5</sup> Photius, moreover, in *Epit. de Spiritu S. Mystagogiae* 9 lists Theognostus among the "great" (μεγάλοι) together with Pierius, Pamphilus, and Dionysius of Alexandria.

Pierius was so close to Origen's thought as to be called "Origen the Younger" according to Jerome (VI 76) and Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 119.<sup>6</sup> Like Origen, he was a presbyter, as Eusebius attests (*HE* 7,32.26), and, as it seems, a martyr or a confessor. He led the Didaskaleion of Alexandria in the Eighties of the third century, under bishop Theonas of Alexandria and emperors Carus and Diocletian, as is testified to by Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 119. He wrote—at least according to Philip of Side—an encomium of the martyr Pamphilus, who had been a disciple of his and in turn wrote an apology for Origen. It is no accident that Pierius is praised by an Origenian such as Eusebius. The latter in *HE* 7,32,27 praises his ascetic life led in poverty, his learning in philosophical disciplines, which made him illustrious (μαθήμασιν φιλοσόφοις δεδοκίμαστο),

<sup>4</sup> See G.C. Hansen, "Zwei Splitter frühchristlicher Literatur," *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (1993) 85–87, with the edition of the scholium found in ms. Florence, Bibl. Medicea Laurenziana, plut. 70, 7 (tenth cent). For another fragment, perhaps authentic, see J.A. Munitz, "A Fragment Attributed to Theognostus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1979) 56–66.

<sup>5</sup> This is clear from both Athanasius's writings and Gobar's testimonies. See here below the section devoted to Athanasius, with full documentation.

<sup>6</sup> On Pierius see at least L.B. Radford, *Three Teachers of Alexandria* (Cambridge, 1908), 44–57; A. Le Boulluec, "Piérius d'Alexandrie," in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, ed. R. Goulet, 5 (Paris, 2011).

and his competence in theology and exegesis (ταῖς περὶ τὰ θεῖα θεωρίαις καὶ ἐξηγήσεσιν); he also alludes to διαλέξεις ἐπὶ τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, which should probably be understood as homilies. In Eusebius's portrait, Pierius really comes close to Origen, as a kind of minor Origen. The main source of information available on Pierius is Jerome, *VI* 76:

Pierius, Alexandrinae ecclesiae *presbyter* sub Caro et Diocletiano principibus, eo tempore quo eam ecclesiam Theonas episcopus regebat, florentissime populos docuit et in tantam sermonis diversorumque tractatum, qui usque hodie extant, venit elegantiam, ut *Origenes iunior* vocaretur. Constat hunc mirae ἀσκήσεως et appetitorem voluntariae *paupertatis* fuisse, *scientissimum* et dialecticae et rhetoricae artis, et post persecutionem omne vitae suae tempus Romae fuisse versatum. Huius est longissimus tractatus de propheta Osee, quem in vigilia Paschae habitum ipse sermo demonstrat.

Jerome in turn is followed by Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 119, p. 93ab, who, on the basis of unknown sources, adds some information that is absent from Jerome's report, such as Pierius's directorship of the Didaskaleion, or an alternative version about the end of his life:

A work was read of the presbyter Pierius, who is said to have undergone a martyr's competition for Christ, along with his brother Isidorus. He is also said to have been the teacher of the martyr Pamphilus in the doctrines of the Church and to have been the director of the school of Alexandria. [...] And some say that he concluded his life with martyrdom, while others aver that after the persecution he spent the rest of his life in Rome.

Photius read a work by Pierius that consisted of twelve books and, perhaps for its antiquity (ἀρχαιοτρόπως ἴσως), included doctrines that were subsequently rejected by the Church. Photius regards Pierius's doctrine on the relationship between the Father and the Son as orthodox; he only remarks upon Pierius's use of οὐσία and φύσις in the sense of ὑπόστασις.<sup>7</sup> According to Pierius, the Spirit descends from the glory of the Father and of the Son. According to Photius, Pierius supported the so-called "preexistence of souls" (προϋπαρξίς ψυχῶν). Like Jerome, Photius too attests to Pierius's byname, "Origen the Younger" or "the new Origen" (νέος Ὠριγένης), moreover testifying to the enormous esteem that Origen enjoyed at that time: ἦν γὰρ τότε ἐν τοῖς ἀξιολογωτάτοις Ὠριγένης. It comes as no surprise that still in

<sup>7</sup> This use is common, for instance, in Athanasius's writings, even in the introduction of a famous quotation from Origen. On this passage see Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism." On Origen's technical use of ὑπόστασις and its roots see Ead., "Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis," *Harvard Theological Review* 105,3 (2012) 302–350.

the second half of the fourth century Pierius was admired by Origenians such as the Tall Brothers, and in particular Ammonius, who read Origen together with Pierius and Didymus, and Melania, who read Origen along with Pierius, Basil, and Gregory, according to Palladius *HL* 11,4 and 55,3. Pierius's exegetical works were strongly allegorical, for instance a long homily devoted to the beginning of Hosea.<sup>8</sup> Pierius too, like Origen, was very well steeped both in rhetoric and in dialectic or logic, and led an ascetic life, made of continence and voluntary poverty, as is testified to by Eusebius *HE* 7,32,26–27, whose information Jerome collected in his own account. Photius, in *De Spiritu S. Mystagogiae* 75, exalts Pierius along with Theognostus and Pamphilus. He praises their learning, the sanctity of their lives, and, in the cases of Pierius and Pamphilus, their martyrdom as well.

In the time of St. Anthony, and in the same monastic milieu, an Origenian allegorical exegete, the learned Hieracas, is found.<sup>9</sup> According to Epiphanius (*Pan.* 67,6), he denied the resurrection of the flesh. We do not know whether Hieracas denied the resurrection of the body as well. Origen and his followers distinguished the body's metaphysical principle of identity (εἶδος), which will remain in the resurrection, and its material substratum (ὑποκείμενον), which always passes away. The latter was sometimes identified with the "flesh"; hence the saying that Origen denied the resurrection of the flesh. Hieracas might even have been misunderstood, like Origen, in his claim that the resurrection must be taken not only physically, but also spiritually, as a resurrection from sin to the Good.<sup>10</sup> This is also the same misunderstanding to which Bardaisan may have been subject.<sup>11</sup> In this way, if all are resurrected, and if this resurrection must be understood also at a spiritual level, all are also saved.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> That this is the work which Cyril criticised in his own Commentary on Hosea, rather than criticising Didymus the Blind or even Origen, is argued by D. Zaganas, "Cyrille d'Alexandrie aux prises avec un exégète allégoriste au début de son *In Oseam*: Didyme l'Aveugle ou Piérius d'Alexandrie?" *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (2010) 480–491.

<sup>9</sup> Among the scanty scholarly works devoted to him see A. Guillaumont, "Christianisme et gnoses dans l'Orient préislamique," *Annuaire du Collège de France* 81 (1980–1981) 407–413; H.F.D. Sparks, "The Order of the Epistles in P46," *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1941) 180–181, according to whom Hieracas read the Epistles in the same order as Pap. Chester Beatty of the NT has them; P. Nautin, "Patristique et histoire des dogmes," *AEHE* (Ve sect.) 84 (1975–1976) 311–315.

<sup>10</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah: Resurrection Announced throughout the Bible and its Twofold Conception," *Augustinianum* 48 (2008) 59–78.

<sup>11</sup> For this hypothesis see Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa*.

<sup>12</sup> In Hieracas (*ap.* Epiphanius *Pan.* 55,5 and 67,1–8) the most ancient explicit attestation

Origen's thought, indeed, had a large diffusion in the Egyptian desert.<sup>13</sup> The monks there read the works of the followers of Origen who worked at the Didaskaleion and the theory of apokatastasis itself spread in the monastic milieu, where a certain knowledge of Gnostic texts also seems to have been widespread.<sup>14</sup> The most important exponent of this milieu was surely St. Anthony, who was acquainted with Alexandrian Christian Platonism (Origen). He wrote many letters to his learned disciples,<sup>15</sup> which in the fourth century circulated widely and were translated into several languages. From these letters, there emerges his use of philosophical (especially Platonic) terms and notions in the service of his ideal of self-knowledge. Anthony's biography, the *Vita Antonii*, was composed by Athanasius, another admirer of Origen,<sup>16</sup> and immensely contributed to create the "myth of

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of the identification of Melchisedek and the Holy Spirit is found. See C. Gianotto, "Melchisedek e lo Spirito santo. Alcuni aspetti della pneumatologia eterodossa tra il III e il IV secolo," *Augustinianum* 20 (1980) 587–593.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. E.P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius* (Leiden, 1968); A. Louf, *St. Antoine. Lettres* (Bellefontaine, 1976), 21 ff.; G.J.M. Bartelink, "Echos aus Platos Phaedo in der Vita Antonii," *Mnemosyne* 37 (1984) 145–147; Id., "Eine Reminiszenz aus Platons Timaeus in der Vita Antonii," *ibid.* 40 (1987) 150 ff.; J.F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity* (Macon, 1988), 139–164; Prinzivalli, *Magister*, 77–78, 186 n. 40; S. Rubenson, "Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century," in *Origeniana VII*, 319–338; esp. C. Kannengiesser, "Origen's Doctrine Transmitted by Antony the Hermit and Athanasius of Alexandria," in *Origeniana VIII*, 889–901; K. Anatolios, "Theology and Economy in Origen and Athanasius," in *Origeniana VII*, 165–172; T. Orlandi, "Testi patristici in lingua copta," in *Patrologia*, V, ed. A. Di Berardino (Genoa, 2000), 497–573, *praes.* 513–515. On Athanasius: A. Martin, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'église d'Égypte au IV siècle* (Rome, 1996); Th. Weinandy, *Athanasius. A Theological Introduction* (Aldershot, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> See W. Myszor, "Antonius-Briefe und Nag-Hammadi-Texte," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 32 (1989) 72–88, who compares Anthony's letters and the Nag Hammadi Gnostic texts on the topics of the soul, asceticism, intelligible substances, and self-knowledge.

<sup>15</sup> In Letter 4, the only one which is entirely preserved in Coptic, Anthony addresses his disciples calling them "learned" and ascribing to them the capacity to know themselves, and thereby to know God.

<sup>16</sup> On the *Vita Antonii* see A. Louth, "St. Athanasius and the Greek Life of Anthony," *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988) 504–509; T. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen, 2010), Ch. 4, who deems the *Vita* a product of earlier sources more than of Athanasius, who limited himself to slightly reworking earlier material; see also below in this same chapter, the section on Athanasius, with further documentation. On the presence of Origen's thought behind Anthony see, e.g., S. Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Anthony: Origenist Theology, Monastic Tradition, and the Making of a Saint* (Bromley, 1990; Minneapolis, 1995), who sees Anthony as a disciple of "wandering ascetics" who taught a "philosophically speculative theology following various schools of Alexandria, including the Origenist tradition" (143); M. O'Laughlin, "Closing the Gap between Antony and Evagrius," in *Origeniana VII: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts*, Hrsg. W.A. Bienert–U. Kühneweg (Leuven, 1999), 345–354, who deems Anthony's Christology more orthodox than Evagrius's. However, a revision is needed of Evagrius's theology as well. See also I. Perczel, "Mankind's



monasticism.”<sup>17</sup> Anthony too, like Origen and like Evagrius subsequently, posited the acquisition of knowledge (γνῶσις) as the goal of Christian life, to be reached by means of “manifestations and secret revelations” (Letter 6,21), and postulated the original unity of all rational beings (Letter 3,4), since all of them formed the same “intellectual essence/substance” (οὐσία νοερά, then transliterated into Coptic), even Satan; only the Holy Trinity was not part of that original unity of rational creatures, in that it transcends them (Letter 5,40).<sup>18</sup> Rational creatures fell from that unity, and descended into the abyss, into a state of death (Letter 5,16–18); spiritual death is a condition of oblivion of one’s true nature; the present heavy body and the inclination to evil have obnubilated the faculties of the mind; this is why rational creatures “have been unable to discover themselves as they were created, that is, as an eternal substance” (Letter 3; cf. 5). But the Logos will bring rational creatures back again to their original condition, in an “apokatastasis of the spirit” (Letters 2; 4–6), precisely the spiritual resurrection-restoration of which Origen spoke, a restoration to the original “nature of our essence,” in virtue and knowledge, and free from evil (Letter 7). Thus, Anthony theorised a “resurrection of the heart from the earth” (Letters 4; 6), which is a spiritual resurrection and entails an allegorical

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Common Intellectual Substance. A Study in the Letters of St. Antony and his Life by St. Athanasius,” in *The Man of Many Devices. Festschrift J.M. Bak* (Budapest, 1999), 197–213 in support of Anthony’s Origenian way of thinking. On Anthony’s philosophical learning see also C. Stewart, “Monastic Attitudes toward Philosophy and Philosophers,” *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010) 321–327, *praes.* 323–324.

<sup>17</sup> See A. Merkt, “Antonius der Einsiedler: Mythos Mönchtum,” in *Mythen Europas: Schlüsselfiguren der Imagination. 1. Antike*, eds. A. Hartmann–M. Neumann (Regensburg, 2004), 186–205; L. Brottier, “Antoine l’ermite à travers les sources anciennes: des regards divers sur un modèle unique,” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 43 (1997) 15–39; D. Wyrwa, “Literarische und theologische Gestaltungselemente in der *Vita Antonii* des Athanasius,” in *Autobiographie und Hagiographie in der christlichen Antike*, eds. J. van Oort–D. Wyrwa (Leuven, 2009), 12–62; P. Bright, “Antony of Egypt and the Discernment of Spirits: The *Vita* of Athanasius and the Letters of Antony,” in *Origeniana IX*, 549–556. See also below, in this same chapter, the section on Athanasius, with discussion of Athanasius’s attitude toward Anthony.

<sup>18</sup> On Anthony’s fourth letter see S. Rubenson, “Der Vierte Antoniusbrief und die Frage nach der Echtheit und Originalsprache der Antoniusbriefe,” *L’Orient Chrétien* 73 (1989) 97–128, with overview of the question of the original language of the Letters and an analysis of the Coptic, Georgian, and Latin versions. These letters reveal an educated author, and, if the original language was Coptic, this means that they were addressed to a learned Coptic public. See also Rubenson, *The Letters*; G. Garitte, *Lettres de St. Antoine: version géorgienne et fragments coptes*, CSCO 148 (Leuven, 1955). Antonio il Grande, *Secondo il Vangelo: le venti lettere di Antonio*, ed. M. El Meskin; tr. from the Arabic by M. Bagatin–C. Pettiti (Magnano, 1999). K.S. Frank, “Antonius von Ägypten und seine Briefe,” in *Von der Suche nach Gott: Helmut Riedlinger zum 75. Geburtstag*, Hrsg. M. Schmidt–F. Domínguez (Stuttgart, 1998), 65–82.

exegesis of the resurrection that Origen applied, without excluding the resurrection of the body. The body will rise as a spiritual body, after the necessary purification taught by the Spirit (Letter 1).<sup>19</sup> Anthony, like Origen, reflects on the meaning of Paul's description of the resurrected body as a σῶμα πνευματικόν in 1Cor 15:44. Just as Origen maintained that one's risen body will keep the same εἶδος ("form" in the metaphysical sense of "substance," and not as "shape") as one's earthly body, but not the material ὑποκείμενον which will pass away in that it continually passes away during the present life, so does Anthony state that the risen body will keep one's "invisible essence/substance," which will not pass away with the material flesh (Letter 6).

The return that characterises Anthony's view of the restoration is marked by the acquisition of knowledge and the awareness of one's spiritual essence. The role of Christ in this restoration is fundamental, in Anthony's view just as in Origen's; the Saviour came "for every rational being"—which is an Origenian and anti-"gnostic" notion—and his coming will free every rational being, once each one has acquired knowledge and discernment (Letter 2). Christ performs the resurrection of minds; with his sacrifice, he "resurrects our minds and bestows on us the remission of our sins" (ibid.).<sup>20</sup> Baptism has people enter Christ, in whom "there is neither man nor woman, neither slave nor free," and thus it announces the future perfect unit.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Gal 3:28 is explicitly quoted by Anthony, who sees the final, eschatological condition of all human beings as one in which "there is neither male nor female" (Letter 6).

<sup>19</sup> On Anthony's ethics see *Philocalie des Pères neptiques*, IX: Antoine le Grand, *Exhortations sur le comportement des hommes et la conduite vertueuse*, intr., tr. & notes par L. Regnault–J. Touraille (Bégrolles-en-Mauges, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> See also Letters 3; 5; 6; 7.

<sup>21</sup> According to F. Klejna, "Antonius und Ammonas. Eine Untersuchung über Herkunft und Eigenart der ältesten Mönchsbrieft," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* (1938) 309–348, the letters that are attributed to Anthony are only partially authentic. Those which Klejna deemed such stem from Anthony's last years and are anti-Arian. Coptic fragments and a Georgian version of the authentic letters are extant; their Origenian drift is emphasised by S. Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony* (Lund, 1990). On the question of the authenticity of Anthony's Letters (especially Letter 6,55) see also D.F. Bumazhnov, "The Evil Angels in the *Vita* and the *Letters* of St. Antony the Great," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 11 (2007) 500–516. On Gal 3:28 in Patristic authors see, e.g.: E. Cattaneo, "Non est masculus neque femina," in *La donna nella Chiesa e nel mondo* (Naples, 1988), 235–244; J.M. O'Connor–C. Militello–M.L. Rigato, *Paolo e le donne* (Assisi, 2006), with the review by I. Ramelli in *Review of Biblical Literature* May 2007; Ead., "Theosebia: A Presbyter of the Catholic Church," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26,2 (2010) 79–102.

Some of the themes of Anthony's letters have been fruitfully compared with the "Gnostic" writings found in Nag Hammadi Codex I.<sup>22</sup> Similarities are numerous and notable, but I would like to underline that at least with regard to the concept of apokatastasis, with which I am primarily concerned here, a remarkable divergence emerges: the restoration and return to unity, from the "Gnostic" (especially Valentinian) point of view, is essentially confined to the class of "pneumatics" and in some cases to some "psychics," but it is impossible for "hylics" and for some or all of the "psychics."<sup>23</sup>

### *Dionysius of Alexandria*

It is meaningful that Athanasius, the anti-Arian champion and an admirer of Origen, wrote an apology for Dionysius of Alexandria († 265),<sup>24</sup> the *De sententiis Dionysii*. As a bishop, Dionysius succeeded Heraclas, who had been a disciple of Origen according to Eusebius (*HE* 6,29,4), and at any rate had collaborated with Origen.<sup>25</sup> According to Eusebius (*HE* 6,29,4), Dionysius had been a pupil of Origen and also wrote a letter to Origen on martyrdom (*HE* 6,46,2).<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Dionysius was profoundly influenced by Origen, even in the choice of allegoresis, as his fragments show, especially those

<sup>22</sup> Besides Myszor, "Antonius-Briefe," see now L. Jenott–E. Pagels, "Antony's Letters and Nag Hammadi Codex I: Sources of Religious Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 (2010) 557–589.

<sup>23</sup> See the section I devote to Gnosticism in this work.

<sup>24</sup> A historical and biographical outline, on the basis of Eusebius's information, is offered by A. Jakab, "Denys d'Alexandrie," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 32 (2001) 3–37; see also C. Andresen, "Siegreiche Kirche im Aufstieg des Christentums. Untersuchungen zu Eusebius von Caesarea und Dionysios von Alexandrien," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II 23,1 (Berlin, 1979), 387–459.

<sup>25</sup> E. Prinzivalli, "La metamorfosi della scuola alessandrina," in *Origeniana VIII*, 911–937 observes that it is significant that both Heraclas and Dionysius were presbyters, directors of the Didaskaleion, and then bishops of Alexandria, which points to an institutionalisation of the Didaskaleion after Origen: for the third and fourth centuries independent sources attest to the permanence of this school. Eusebius is the main source on the succession of the directors of the Didaskaleion; for the subsequent period, the fourth-century historian Philip of Side is available, but less reliable. Philip reconstructed the succession of the Alexandrian Didaskaleion according to an Oxford ms., Codex Baroccianus 142, fol. 216. See, however, B. Pouderon, "Athénagore chef d'école: à propos du témoignage de Philippe de Sidè," in *Studia Patristica* 26 (Leuven, 1993), 167–176. Other, very partial, sources are Pamphilus, *ap.* Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 118, 2,92, and 119, 2,93, and Rufinus, *HE* 2,7, who describes Didymus as *scholae ecclesiasticae doctor*, approved of by Athanasius and others.

<sup>26</sup> See W.A. Bienert, "Dionysius der Große und Origenes," in *Studia Patristica* 16 (1985) 219–223; Marksches, *Origenes und sein Erbe*, 142, emphasises the continuity with Origen.

gleaned from the so-called *Catena Hauniensis*.<sup>27</sup> The anonymous author of an apology for Origen preserved by Photius (*Bibl. Cod.* 117) cites Dionysius's works among "the texts in favour of Origen," along with Pamphilus, Eusebius, Demetrius, and Clement. Likewise, according to the sixth-century Byzantine author Gobar (*ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 232, p. 291a Bekker), Athanasius of Alexandria was a strenuous defender of Dionysius (ὁ μέγας Ἀθανάσιος Διονυσίου ὑπεραπολογεῖται), especially against accusations of Arianism<sup>28</sup>—the same as levelled against Origen, on no grounds. Athanasius knew that Dionysius's writings bore no trace of Arianism, just as he knew, and stated, that Origen was an anti-Arian *ante litteram*.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, again according to Gobar (*ibid.* 291b), Dionysius himself, writing to Origen and, after the latter's death, to Theotecnus of Caesarea,<sup>30</sup> greatly praised Origen: δι' ἐπαίνων τὸν Ὀριγένην ἄγει. A whole section of Gobar's work was devoted to the listing of all the holy theologians who admired and praised Origen: St. Athanasius, Titus of Bostra, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Gregory Nyssen, St. Dionysius of Alexandria, St. Alexander of Jerusalem the Martyr:

Origen and Theognostus were received and praised in many points both by Athanasius the Great of Alexandria and by Titus of Bostra. Moreover, Gregory the Theologian in his letters calls Origen "the lover of the Good"

<sup>27</sup> Ed. Labate, CCG 24 (Turnhout, 1992). See also A. Labate, "Il recupero del Commentario all'Ecclesiaste di Dionigi Alessandrino attraverso le catene bizantine," *Koinonia* 16 (1992) 53–74. That Dionysius was a follower of Origen has been contested by W.A. Bienert, *Dionysius von Alexandria: Zur Frage des Origenismus im dritten Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1978), but not on convincing grounds; see T. Vivian, *St. Peter of Alexandria, Bishop and Martyr* (Philadelphia, 1988), 110–126.

<sup>28</sup> Τὰ γὰρ Ἀρείου Διονύσιος οὔτε ἐφρόνησέ ποτε οὔτε ἠγνόησε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, οὔτε γὰρ ὑφ' ἐτέρων ἐπισκόπων ἐπ' ἀσεβείας κατεγνώσθη οὔτε τὰς ἀρειανικὰς φωνὰς ἐφθέγγετο ὡς δογματίζων.

<sup>29</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism." As for Dionysius's own Trinitarian positions, in the controversy with Dionysius of Rome, see P.C. Costa, *Salvatoris disciplina: Dionísio de Roma e a Regula fidei no debate teológico do 3. século* (Rome, 2002) and especially H. Pietras, "L'unità di Dio in Dionigi di Alessandria," *Gregorianum* 72 (1991) 459–490, who deems Athanasius's quotations of Dionysius of Alexandria trustworthy and demonstrates how, in his controversy with Dionysius of Rome, Dionysius of Alexandria defended the unity of God against any risk of tritheism. Contrast L. Abramowski, "Dionys von Rom (†268) und Dionys von Alexandrien (†264/5) in den arianischen Streitigkeiten des 4. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 93 (1982) 240–272. On Dionysius's Christology see M. Simonetti, *Studi sulla cristologia del II e III secolo* (Rome, 1993), 53–69.

<sup>30</sup> He is the bishop who protected Origen when he moved from Alexandria to Caesarea. Pamphilus related all this at length in his apology, which was still read in Greek by Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 118. On p. 93a Bekker he details: "When Origen was banned from Alexandria, Theotecnus of Palestine willingly received him, that he might dwell in Caesarea, and gave him every power to teach."

[φιλόκαλος],<sup>31</sup> and Gregory of Nyssa as well mentions him in very positive terms [εὐφήμως εἰς μνήμην ἄγει]. But also Dionysius of Alexandria, writing precisely to him, and still after his death writing to Theotecnus, the bishop of Caesarea, praises Origen [δι' ἐπαίνων τὸν Ὀριγένην ἄγει], and Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem and martyr, writing to Origen himself, uses expressions of extreme familiarity with him [λίαν οἰκειοῦται τὸν ἄνδρα τοῖς λόγοις].  
(ibid. 291b)

Rufinus too—faithful to his thesis of the falsification of orthodox works by “heretics”—remarks that the “Arians” unduly used Dionysius’s words in defence of their own ideas; this is why Athanasius wrote his apology (*De adult.* 5).<sup>32</sup>

At the time of the persecutions of Decius and Valerianus, Dionysius had to face the problem of the readmission of the *lapsi*, that is, those renegade Christians who asked to enter the Church again. What we know about him is mostly due to Eusebius in *HE* 6–7 and *PE* 14; he had access to Dionysius’s letters, including a letter to Origen (*HE* 6,46,2).<sup>33</sup> He also preserves a part of

<sup>31</sup> This is the same appellative that Athanasius uses in his biography of Anthony (4) to indicate the lover of the ascetic way of life. It is also used by Epiphanius (*AH* 69,4,9) to denote the lover of learning. Both traits are true of Origen.

<sup>32</sup> *Dionysius quoque, Alexandrinus episcopus, eruditissimus adsertor ecclesiasticae fidei, cum in quam plurimis in tantum unitatem atque aequalitatem Trinitatis defendat ut imperitioribus quibusque etiam secundum Sabellium sensisse uideatur, in his tamen libris ipsius quos auersum Sabellii haeresim scribit talia inueniuntur inserta ut frequenter Arriani auctoritate ipsius se defendere conentur. Propter quod et sanctus episcopus Athanasius compulsus est Apologeticum pro libris ipsius scribere.*

<sup>33</sup> On the writings of Dionysius that were available in Eusebius’s library see A.J. Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Leiden, 2003), 199–206. According to him, Dionysius’s letter to Origen on martyrdom was included in one of the two separate collections forming a dossier on the Novatian controversy that Eusebius had at his disposal. Dionysius’s alleged correspondence with Paul of Samosata, instead, seems to be pseudepigraphic. M. Simonetti, “Sulla corrispondenza tra Dionigi di Alessandria e Paolo di Samosata,” *Augustinianum* 47 (2007) 321–334 dates it to the sixth century. On Dionysius’s letters see also P.A. Legutko, “The Letters of Dionysius: Alexandrian and Christian Identity in the Mid-Third Century AD,” *The Ancient World* 34 (2003) 27–41. Two other noteworthy studies on Dionysius’s letters are H. Pietras, “Lettera pros Germanon di Dionigi Alessandrino: osservazioni e prova di ricostruzione,” *Gregorianum* 71 (1990) 573–583, who argues that the letter *pros Germanon* repeatedly cited by Eusebius was not written to Germanus, but against him, as a defence against Germanus’s accusations concerning Dionysius’s conduct during the persecution of Valerianus; and Y. Tissot, “Le rapt de Denys d’Alexandrie et la chronologie de ses Lettres festales,” *Revue d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 77 (1997) 51–65 on the festal letter to Domitius and Didymus mentioned by Eusebius *HE* 7,11; Tissot dates it to 259 CE, and dates all of Dionysius’s festal letters between 259 and 262. On this letter see also M. Sordi, “Aspetti della cristianità alessandrina nel III secolo d. C.: La lettera di Dionigi a Domizio e a Didimo e la persecuzione di Valeriano,” in *Alessandria e il mondo ellenistico-romano. Studi in onore di*

Dionysius's work *On Promises* against millenarianism, which shows Dionysius's philological skills (these too remind one of Origen's own philological talent<sup>34</sup>). He argued there that the author of Revelation could not be John the son of Zebedee, whom he deems the author of the Gospel and 1 John. Dionysius, like many other Origenian Fathers, disliked Revelation, essentially because it was invoked as a Scriptural basis for millenarianism, an interpretation that Origen himself rejected. However, Dionysius accepts it as an inspired book "because it is deeply esteemed by many brothers," and also because he has "the suspicion that there is a deeper meaning hidden under its words." This clearly calls for an allegorical interpretation, which is the same as that which allowed Origen to accept Revelation as Scripture and comment on it. Eusebius indeed attests that Dionysius, exactly like Origen, deemed it necessary to seek out the spiritual meaning of Revelation after realising, and showing, that the literal-historical meaning is defective or even lacking.<sup>35</sup>

Dionysius, who came from a prosperous family, received a good education, also in philosophy—again like Origen. His work *On Nature*, against Epicurean materialism,<sup>36</sup> shows this, and his zetetic method also does so. The latter is clearly the method that was adopted by Origen. Dionysius, thus, followed Origen, not only in the allegorical exegesis of the Bible, but also in the adoption of a philosophical method that was clearly heuristic, as was noted by Athanasius, *Sent.* 14. Dionysius composed an Apology for Origen in four books, in which he especially endeavoured to defend Origen's theology;

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Achille Adriani, I (Rome, 1983), 38–42; cf. Eadem, "Dionisio di Alessandria e le vicende della persecuzione di Valeriano in Egitto," in *Paradoxos politeia. Studi patristici in onore di Giuseppe Lazzati*, ed. R. Cantalamessa–L.F. Pizzolato (Milan, 1980), 288–295.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., my "Origen and the Stoic allegorical tradition: Continuity and Innovation," *Invigilata Lucernis* 28 (2006) 195–226; J.A. McGuckin, "Origen as Literary Critic in the Alexandrian Tradition," in *Origeniana VIII*, 121–136.

<sup>35</sup> See my "The Philosophical Stance" and A. Monaci, "Origene e Dionigi di Alessandria sulle promesse," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 15 (1998) 101–123. For Origen's attitude to apocalypticism and his interpretation of Matt 24:1–35 in both a literal and an allegorical sense, see Ead., "Apocalisse ed escatologia nell'opera di Origene," *Augustinianum* 18 (1978) 139–151. See also H. Pietras, "I Principi II 11 di Origene e il millenarismo," in *Origeniana VIII*, 707–714. On Origenism and millenarianism see E. Prinzivalli, "Il millenarismo in Oriente da Metodio ad Apollinare," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 15 (1998) 125–151; Eadem, "L'attesa della fine: Origene e la tradizione origeniana tra il IV e il V secolo," in *Millennium: l'attesa della fine nei primi secoli cristiani*, ed. R. Ugione (Turin, 2002), 243–265; Ead., *Magister*, 74: Dionysius diminished the authority of Revelation by attributing it to an author different from John the Evangelist.

<sup>36</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Epicureanism and Early Christianity," in *Oxford Handbook of Epicureanism*, eds. J. Fish–K. Sanders (Oxford, 2013).

the same was done by Athanasius. The anonymous author of the *Apology for Origen* preserved by Photius (*Bibl. Cod.* 117) adduced Dionysius, together with Demetrius,<sup>37</sup> in support of Origen's doctrines.<sup>38</sup> Dionysius, past disciple of Origen, after becoming bishop reconciled his teacher with the Egyptian clergy; he also dedicated a work *On Martyrdom* to him (Eus. *HE* 6,46,2) and wrote an *Encomium of Origen* (Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 232, 5,79). It is not accidental that Dionysius was strongly admired by Eusebius. In *On Promises*, 1, he expressed his wish that all Christians might "entertain sublime and lofty views" about "the divinity, in its glory and its true dignity, and about the resurrection of humans from the dead, and about their union with God and their assimilation to God." These were also the characteristics of the eventual apokatastasis in Origen's thought.

Dionysius also shows a special linguistic awareness concerning the terminology of eternity, which is crucial in Patristic reflections on apokatastasis, and which is particularly clear in Origen.<sup>39</sup> This is evident especially from his comments on Ecclesiastes 1:4, "One generation passes away, another comes, but the earth remains εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα." In the Bible, αἰών, which in the LXX regularly translates the Hebrew *'olam*, indicates an indefinite time, remote in the past or in the future, or very long, or else the other world.<sup>40</sup> Dionysius, who clearly remembers, not only the Biblical lexicon, but also Origen's doctrine of the sequence of aeons after the creation and before the final apokatastasis,<sup>41</sup> observes that the Biblical text has εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα and not εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας and concludes that for this reason the earth will endure for this aeon, but not for all aeons. Dionysius, like Origen, knows that εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα in the Bible does not mean "forever, eternally," and that, as a consequence, αἰώνιος does not mean "eternal." When he encounters it in NT expressions such as πῦρ αἰώνιον, θάνατος αἰώνιος, or κόλασις αἰώνιος, he knows that these mean punishments in the next world, but not eternal. This lexical awareness is clearly pivotal to the doctrine of apokatastasis. Similarly, in ch. 3, v. 11, Dionysius, commenting on the words "clarify to me the brevity of my days," expresses with αἰών one's life in the present world: "for our own sake, the end of this αἰών, that is, of the present life, is something that we do not know."

<sup>37</sup> It is true that this bishop condemned Origen, but not from the doctrinal point of view: only from the disciplinary point of view.

<sup>38</sup> On Photius as witness to Origen and his tradition see É. Jeuneau, "Origène et la tradition alexandrine vus par Photius dans sa *Bibliothèque*," in *Origeniana VIII*, 1089–1102.

<sup>39</sup> See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, 116–129.

<sup>40</sup> See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, 37–70.

<sup>41</sup> See on this Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology*.

In ch. 3 v. 4, commenting on the sentence, “there is a time for sorrow and there is a time for dance,” Dionysius takes up Paul’s opposition between Adam and Christ, the death and condemnation that all inherited from Adam and the justification, life, and salvation that all will have in Christ.<sup>42</sup> Dionysius, like Origen, insists on the tempting action of the demons, but is confident that God’s action prevails. Commenting on the Gospel of Luke, and in particular on Jesus’s exhortation to serenity notwithstanding the tribulations of this world, because he has defeated the world, Dionysius remarks that “the devil tempts us strongly, trying hard to lead us to *destruction*, but God takes us by hand, instructing us for the sake of our *salvation*.” Likewise, commenting upon the words “and do not induce us into temptation, but free us from evil” in the Lord’s Prayer, Dionysius observes that “from God there cannot come any temptation to do evil, but God wants to donate only the Good, in abundance and superabundance, above anything we may ask or think. And what God wants is a perfect will.” This perfect will of God, which is accomplished thanks to the Son, is universal salvation (1 Tim 2:4–6: “God wants all human beings to be saved”).

Origen’s ideas on God’s salvific will and therapeutic and instructive attitude seem to be reflected also in Dionysius’s behaviour and reflections during the controversy over the *lapsi*. In a letter to Fabius of Antioch, ch. 10, Dionysius argues that the Church should readmit the *lapsi* in that the martyrs—precisely those who died in order not to abjure—, instead of condemning them, forgive them and accept them back into communion:

Since they have seen that the repentance and conversion of these people was dear to the One who *does not want the death of the sinner, but his conversion*, then (the martyrs) have tested their sincerity and *have received them*.

The martyrs forgive the *lapsi* who have repented because they know that this is the will of God, who wants all humans to be saved.<sup>43</sup> Not only God’s will, but also Christ’s behaviour is a model that should exhort to the readmission

<sup>42</sup> On the relevant Pauline passages, from 1 Corinthians and Romans, see above, Ch. 1.

<sup>43</sup> On this controversy and the attitude of the church toward the *lapsi* in the broader context of the Christian doctrine of reconciliation see I. Ramelli, “Unconditional Forgiveness in Christianity? Some Reflections on Ancient Christian Sources and Practices,” in *The Ethics of Forgiveness. A Collection of Essays*, ed. Chr. Fricke (London–New York, 2011), 30–48. Commenting on Luke 22:48, Dionysius reflects on Judas’ kiss and Jesus’s words, “Judas, do you betray the Son of the Human Being with a kiss?” He remarks that Jesus calls Judas by name and “does not use the tone of someone who is angry at somebody,” but rather that of someone who “pities a person and wishes to call her back,” thus showing that he considers no one to be irredeemable.



of the penitent *lapsi*: “Christ, who is the good Shepherd, goes look for the sheep that errs astray over the mountains and calls it back, even when this flees from him, and takes the trouble of *putting it onto his shoulders after finding it*. And dare we reject such a person even when he comes back to us?” Dionysius goes on to exhort ecclesiastical people to be careful in their treatment of *lapsi*, to avoid the risk of adhering to evil rather than the Good and to be filled with remorse and the demons of remorse “both in this world and after their death.” Again, Dionysius does not say “forever,” “eternally.”

A mention must at least be made of Cyprian of Carthage, who also worked in the wake of Decius’s persecution in an African context. Allen Brent<sup>44</sup> argues that he, an educated upper-class Roman, shared in the eschatological perspectives of his pagan contemporaries. He saw a decline in the history of the material world preceding the coming of the Antichrist, but also a rebirth. He had to manage the problem of *lapsi* and *confessores*.<sup>45</sup> In *Ep.* 59 to Antonianus he comments on the Matthew parable of imprisonment for debts and distinguishes between those, i.e. martyrs, who immediately attain beatitude, and the others, who must undergo a purifying punishment until they have paid up to the last coin. Some have seen in this a testimony to the doctrine of Purgatory;<sup>46</sup> however, no mention is made of people who are *never* purified and must remain in prison forever (corresponding to the idea of eternal “hell”).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Cyprian and Roman Carthage (Cambridge, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> Decian confessors in Carthage were thought to have the powers of presbyters (*Trad. ap.* 9: *ordinatio per confessionem*), including that of absolving the *lapsi*. Cyprian tried to limit these powers (Brent, *Cyprian*, 257–258, 266–267, 283), through a re-thinking of the theology of martyrdom and sacramental ministry (275). See also I. Ramelli, “*Sacramentum* and *Mysterium* in the *Vetus Latina* and some African Patristic Authors,” Lecture at *In Africa There Are Dissensions. International Donatist Symposium, Leuven 17–18.V.2012* (Leuven, 2013).

<sup>46</sup> P. Jay, “Saint Cyprien et la doctrine du purgatoire,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 27 (1960) 133–136.

<sup>47</sup> In *C. Novat.* 1 (a work that, if not by Cyprian, is by a contemporary), emphasis is laid on mercy with *lapsi* as one should never “steal away the hope for salvation by denying the Father’s mercy,” also because sinners have been “wounded by the fury of the devil.” Ibid. 9 accuses Novatian of reading in Scripture only that which “tends to the destruction of salvation” and not proofs of God’s mercy, which the author reports in abundance; *ibid.* 12 it is remarked that after every fall God can restore the sinner.

*Hilary of Poitiers and Origen's First Influence in the West*

Still long after Origen's death almost nobody, apart perhaps Novatian,<sup>48</sup> knew his works and thought in the West—and the first complete Latin translations of several of his works will be available only at the very end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century, with Jerome and Rufinus. Eusebius of Vercelli and Ambrose prove in their works the Western diffusion of Origen's exegesis. But already before this, Hilary of Poitiers († 367) seems to represent a felicitous exception.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, especially his twelve-book masterpiece, *De Trinitate*,<sup>50</sup> shows a remarkable influence of Origen. It is no accident that also in Trinitarian matters Hilary is on the line of Origen: that is, anti-"Arian."<sup>51</sup>

Origen's influence on Hilary's thought is also evident from his scriptural allegoresis, especially in his Commentary on Matthew. Here, Hilary, perfectly in line with Origen's theorisation in *Princ.* 4, repeatedly shows that it is necessary to interpret a scriptural passage allegorically because the literal sense includes logical or factual impossibilities, those which Origen indicated in his hermeneutical theory as *ἄλογα* and *ἀδύνατα*. When Hilary

<sup>48</sup> See M. Simonetti, "Origene in Occidente prima della controversia," *Augustinianum* 46 (2006) 25–34.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. J. Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers. Disciple et témoin de la vérité*, rev. M. Milhau (Turnhout–Paris, 2005).

<sup>50</sup> Hilaire de Poitiers, *La Trinité, Livres I–III*; ed. P. Smulders (CCL); intr. M. Figura–J. Doignon; tr. G.M. de Durand–C. Morel–G. Pelland, SChr 443 (Paris, 1999); *La Trinité, Livres IV–VIII*, ed. P. Smulders (CCL); tr. G.M. de Durand–C. Morel–G. Pelland (Paris, 2000); *La Trinité, Livres IX–XII*; ed. P. Smulders (CCL); tr. G.M. de Durand–G. Pelland–C. Morel, SChr 462 (Paris, 2001). C.L. Beckwith, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity. From De fide to De Trinitate* (Oxford, 2008), argues that what we have as Books 2–3 of *De Trinitate* originally constituted a separate work, *De fide*. Afterwards Hilary integrated it into *De Trinitate*.

<sup>51</sup> For Origen's anti-Arianism (of course *ante litteram*) see Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism." L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford, 2004), 236–240, rightly presents Hilary as a pro-Nicene. C.L. Beckwith, "Photinian Opponents in Hilary of Poitiers' *Commentarium in Matthaeum*," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58 (2007) 611–627 observes that Hilary in *Comm. in Matth.* 12,17–18 and 31,1,2–3 was in fact countering "Photinian" views. On Hilary as pro-Nicene see M. Weedman, "Hilary and the Homoiousians: Using New Categories to Map the Trinitarian Controversy," *Church History* 76 (2007) 491–510, who analyses Hilary's strategic alliance with Basil of Ancyra. L. Ladaria, "Patrem consummat Filius: un aspecto inédito de la teología trinitaria de Hilario de Poitiers," *Gregorianum* 81 (2000) 775–788, shows how Hilary reconciled the equality among the divine Persons and the Father–Son relationship by means of the concept of reciprocity. On Hilary's anti-subordinationism and the affirmation of the coeternity of the Son with the Father, along the lines of Origen, see G. Flammini, "L'inno *Ante saecula qui manes* di Ilario di Poitiers ovvero Il contributo dell'inno-grafia alla difesa della teologia nicena," *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere di Macerata* 38 (2005) 205–242.

wrote his Commentary on Matthew, he probably did not know the homonymous commentary by Origen; at least, he does not seem to rely on it in his own commentary. However, he does seem to have absorbed the allegorical method.<sup>52</sup> Then, after his exile in Phrygia in 356 CE,<sup>53</sup> Hilary became directly acquainted with Origen's works. His Commentaries on Psalms, which are extant,<sup>54</sup> are closely inspired by Origen and chronologically also close to Eusebius of Vercelli's Latin translation of Eusebius's own Commentary on Psalms, which was replete with Origenian themes. It is telling that, according to Jerome, Hilary's Commentaries on Psalms are almost a translation of Origen's Commentary on Psalms:

Et in Psalmos Commentarios, primum videlicet et secundum, et a quinquagesimo primo usque ad sexagesimum secundum, et a centesimo decimo octavo usque ad extremum, *in quo opere imitatus Origenem*, nonnulla etiam de suo addidit. (Jerome VI 100)

Only fragments survive from Origen's own commentary, but the comparisons that can be drawn between Origen's and Hilary's works indicate that Hilary's commentary is indeed a free version of that of Origen, with cuts and other alterations of the original Greek.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it is natural that it reflects Origen's ideas. For instance, Hilary takes over the explanation of God's wrath, mentioned in the Bible, and of the punishments that God inflicts on sinners (48,1–26): God, being ἀπαθής or free from passions, cannot become angry, and in fact does not even punish anyone—an idea of Origen's that will be developed especially by Gregory of Nyssa<sup>56</sup>—, but it is rather sin

<sup>52</sup> According to D.H. Williams, "Defining Orthodoxy in Hilary of Poitiers' *Commentarium in Matthaeum*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001) 151–171, before his exile (356 CE) Hilary did not know the so-called Nicene creed and was not acquainted with the controversies surrounding it. It is uncertain whether his *Commentary on Matthew* has anything to do with the "Arian" controversy. On the other hand, Williams admits that Hilary countered subordinationism (31,3; 16,5), which was widespread in the West in the III and IV centuries. I find that Hilary's anti-subordinationism is the same as Origen's.

<sup>53</sup> On which see at least C.L. Beckwith, "The Condemnation and Exile of Hilary of Poitiers at the Synod of Béziers (356 C.E.)," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13 (2005) 21–38, who traces Hilary's exile back to theological, ecclesiastical, and political causes.

<sup>54</sup> Hilaire de Poitiers, *Commentaires sur les Psaumes* 1 (Psaumes 1–14), texte critique du CCL 61 (J. Doignon); intr., trad., notes et index par P. Descourtieux, Sources chrétiennes 515 (Paris, 2008). On eschatology in Hilary's *Tractatus super Psalmos* see P. Martens (ed.), *In the Shadow of Incarnation* (Notre Dame, IN, 2008), Ch. 3.

<sup>55</sup> E. Goffinet, *L'utilisation d'Origène dans le Commentaire des Psaumes de Saint Hilaire de Poitiers* (Louvain, 1965); A. Orazzo, *La salvezza in Ilario di Poitiers: Cristo salvatore dell'uomo nel Tractatus super Psalmos* (Naples, 1986).

<sup>56</sup> See my commentary on his *De anima et resurrectione* in my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima e la resurrezione*, with essays, edition, translation, commentary, and appendixes (Milan, 2007),

that is a punishment to itself. Fear of punishment is a pedagogical strategy, for Hilary just as for Origen. If human beings love God, this is an advantage for them, and not for God, who does not keep for himself the eternal goods that are in him, but “takes us with him,” in order to have us participate in his blessed goodness.<sup>57</sup> Another of the typical conceptions of Origen that are reflected in Hilary’s work is that only the Godhead is the Good itself, thanks to its immutable nature, whereas all other beings are not intrinsically good (p. 124,1 ff.; 20 ff.; 46,10 ff.).

According to Jerome (VI 100), Hilary drew inspiration from Origen in his *Tractatus in Iob* as well, which are not extant now, but were available to Jerome. Hilary practically translated Origen’s exegesis of Job in a rather free manner (the same as Jerome himself did with other exegetical works of Origen<sup>58</sup>): *Et Tractatus in Iob, quos de Graeco Origenis ad sensum transtulit*. It is probable that Hilary’s Commentary on the Song of Songs, too, betrayed an influence of Origen, who commented on it in one of his most sublime and influential works. Hilary also abundantly used the so-called typology—widely employed by Origen as well—especially in his *Liber Mysteriorum* (I use the title given by Jerome, VI 100). Here, the *mysteria* at stake are essentially the prefigurations of Christ found in some OT characters. Jerome, in this case, does not remark upon this, because, as he himself acknowledges, this work of Hilary’s was not available to him.<sup>59</sup> This of typology was also a powerful “weapon” of which Origen availed himself to contrast “Gnostic” and especially Marcionite dichotomies and maintain the unity of Scripture (OT and NT), the body of Christ. Also, I think that Hilary’s conviction (highlighted by Adam Kamesar<sup>60</sup>) that the Septuagint is inspired and superior to the Hebrew text and the other translations is another point that Hilary had in common with Origen.

Hilary also shares with Origen—and with Gregory of Nyssa after him—the dualistic vision that inspired Paul’s dichotomy between the mortal body

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with the reviews by P. Tzamalikos in *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008) 515–523; M.J. Edwards in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60,4 (2009) 764–765; M. Herrero de Háuregui, in *Ilus* 13 (2008) 334–336; G. Maspero in *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 15 (2011), 592–594.

<sup>57</sup> See also L.F. Ladaría, “*Dispensatio* en San Hilario de Poitiers,” *Gregorianum* 66 (1985) 429–455.

<sup>58</sup> See below, Ch. 3, section on Rufinus and Jerome.

<sup>59</sup> *Aiunt quidam scripsisse eum et in Cantica Canticorum, sed a nobis hoc opus ignoratur* (Jerome VI 100).

<sup>60</sup> “Hilary of Poitiers, Judeo-Christianity, and the origins of the LXX: a translation of *Tractatus Super Psalmos* 2.2–3 with introduction and commentary,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 59 (2005) 264–285.

and the glorious body of the resurrection (cf. *In Ps.* 119,19). Hilary, like Origen, uses Paul in order to describe life in the end; he takes over the notion of a “spiritual body” and the idea of a full realisation of the “image of God” (*In Ps.* 50,2; *Trin.* 11,8). The human being, moulded from the earth, will assume God’s image once its *forma servilis* has been transformed for the eternal life.<sup>61</sup> Hilary is convinced that in the end humanity will participate in the glory of God, after Christ has subjected everything to the Father. And Hilary’s interpretation of 1 Cor 15:28—Origen’s favourite scriptural passage in support of apokatastasis—in *Trin.* 11,40–49 is the very same as Origen’s,<sup>62</sup> an anti-subordinationistic interpretation: that is, Christ’s final submission to the Father is the submission of all humanity, which is the body of Christ, and a submission that is salvific.<sup>63</sup> Like Origen and Gregory of Nyssa who followed him, Hilary highlights the notions of the submission of Christ as the submission of humanity, and of the “glory” of Christ. It is often observed that the “Arians” relied on 1 Cor 15:28 to affirm the inequality between Christ and God the Father.<sup>64</sup> But in fact already the “subordinationists” against whom Origen polemicised—who evidently were no “Arians” proper—interpreted 1 Cor 15:28 as evidence of Christ’s subordination to the Father.<sup>65</sup> Origen’s concern passed on to Hilary. Also, like Origen, Hilary considers redemption the result of Christ’s incarnation (*Comm. Matt.* 19,5; *Trin.* 2,24–25):

Christ has become *the body of the whole of humanity*, that, through the body that he was kind enough to assume, *the whole of humanity might be hidden in him*, and he, by means of his unseen existence, could be reproduced in all [...] we were exalted because he humiliated himself [...] He, who is God, dwelt in the flesh, and we have been lifted up again from the flesh to God.<sup>66</sup>

(*In Ps.* 51,16–17; 54,9)

With the Incarnation, Christ has taken up the whole of humanity.<sup>67</sup> The latter, in Christ, is glorified (*Trin.* 10,7). The Incarnation allows for the *communio naturae* of God with the human being (*Trin.* 11,16), which must be

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *In Ps.* 118, 20,9–10; 118, 3,3; *Trin.* 11,49.

<sup>62</sup> For Origen’s interpretation see Ramelli, “The Trinitarian Theology.”

<sup>63</sup> See *In Ps.* 126,17 on the eternal inheritance; 147,2 on the heavenly Jerusalem.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. G. Pelland, “La subiectio du Christ chez Saint Hilaire,” *Gregorianum* 64 (1983) 423–452; M. Durst, *Die Eschatologie des Hilarius von Poitiers* (Bonn, 1987).

<sup>65</sup> See Ramelli, “*In Illud*.”

<sup>66</sup> Cf. G. Vaccari, *La teologia dell’assunzione in Ilario di Poitiers. Uno studio sui termini adsumere e adsumptio* (Rome, 1994).

<sup>67</sup> J.R. Meyer, “*Assumptio carnis* and the Ascent to God: Hilary’s Revision of Irenaeus’ Doctrine of *Salus carnis*,” *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 9 (2005) 303–319.

completed by humans themselves with faith and sacraments (*In Ps.* 51,16; 91,9; *Trin.* 8,16). In this way, the church becomes the *corpus gloriosum Christi*, and for Hilary, just as for Origen, the incarnation has its full realisation in the end (*In Ps.* 51,17; *Myst.* 1,5). The glorification of human beings, which is *salus carnis*, consists in their participation in the living God's immortality (*Trin.* 11,39–40).<sup>68</sup>

Again drawing on Origen, and in particular on his notion of ἀφθαρσία, Hilary sees the eternal life as the elimination of corruption (*corruptio*) and as participation in God's glory (*gloria Dei*), being reminiscent of Paul's declaration "it is sowed in shamefulness, it will raise in glory" (cf. *In Ps.* 118,3,3; 67,37). The new life will be a *reformatio*, the reconstitution or restoration of the creature to its original perfection. This is a concept that is very close to Origen's idea of apokatastasis and to his idea, taken over by Gregory of Nyssa, that the resurrection will be a restoration of humanity.<sup>69</sup> Human nature, moreover, is defined by Hilary in accord with Origen's Alexandrian anthropology: only the inner human being is the essential human being, that created in the image of God (Gen 1:26).<sup>70</sup>

### *Athanasius of Alexandria*

During the last three years of his life, Athanasius († 373)<sup>71</sup> wrote two letters to the Origenian Palladius, the disciple of the Origenian Evagrius, which, along with another letter of his to John and Antiochus, should be regarded as authentic.<sup>72</sup> Here, just as in other letters, he also speaks in very positive terms of Basil of Caesarea, calling him "our beloved Basil" and recommending that the monks of Caesarea obey him. Basil too, indeed, was a strong supporter of the Nicene faith, of which Athanasius was a strenuous defender,

<sup>68</sup> See W. Turek, "Fili Deo per Spiritum adoptionis effecti (*De Trinitate* 12, 13): la divinizzazione dell'uomo in alcuni testi d'Ilario di Poitiers," *Salesianum* 66 (2004) 665–686.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *In Ps.* 143,7; *Trin.* 11,49; R. Iacoangeli, "Il linguaggio soteriologico di Ilario di Poitiers," in *Cristologia e catechesi patristica*, ed. S. Felici (Rome, 1980), 121–148.

<sup>70</sup> J.A. Cánovas Sánchez, "Claves de la soteriología en san Hilario de Poitiers," *Scripta Fulgentina* 14 (2004) 21–32.

<sup>71</sup> I limit myself to referring to A. Martin, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'église d'Égypte au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Rome, 1996); Th. Weinandy, *Athanasius. A Theological Introduction* (Aldershot, 2007); *Athanasius Handbuch*, Hrg. P. Gemeinhardt (Tübingen, 2011); A.M. Ritter, "Athanasius as Trinitarian Theologian," *Studia Patristica* 52 (2012) 101–112.

<sup>72</sup> So U. Heil, "Athanasius und Basilus," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 10 (2006) 103–120, who also observes that from Basil's correspondence there comes no argument against the authenticity of these letters, which date from the last years of Athanasius's life.

but Palladius and Evagrius were as well, as I shall point out in due course.<sup>73</sup> Athanasius decided to write the biography of St. Anthony, whose Origenian convictions I have already demonstrated;<sup>74</sup> the preface to his Festal Letter 10 attests to a visit of Anthony's to Alexandria. Even though Athanasius's picture of Anthony is somehow different from what emerges from Anthony's own letters,<sup>75</sup> nevertheless Athanasius's choice of Anthony is telling in itself,<sup>76</sup> given that he certainly was not unaware of the plethora of Origenian themes in Anthony's thought and letters. Moreover, as is attested by Rufinus *HE* 2,7, Athanasius decided to appoint as head of the Didaskaleion Didymus, whose adhesion to the doctrine of apokatastasis I shall soon highlight.<sup>77</sup> Also, Athanasius decided to compose an apology of the thought of Dionysius of Alexandria, whose Origenian orientations I have already pointed out.<sup>78</sup> All of these choices are meaningful.

What is more, Athanasius expressed a very positive evaluation of Origen himself and indeed much admiration. In *De decretis Nicaenae synodi* 27,1 Athanasius quotes Origen in support of the coeternity of the Son with the

<sup>73</sup> See below, Ch. 3, the section concerning Evagrius.

<sup>74</sup> See above in this same chapter, note 13.

<sup>75</sup> For instance, F. Graf, "Saint Antony: Deconstructing a Visionary," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 62 (2006) 293–300 observes that Athanasius endeavoured to obscure the charismatic, prophetic, and visionary aspects of Anthony's life (as reflected, e.g., in *Apoph. Ant.* 26 and 30). On the same line are also M. Williams, "The *Life of Anthony* and the Domestication of Charismatic Wisdom," in *Charisma and Sacred Biography*, ed. Idem (Chico, CA, 1982), 23–45; M.S. Williams, *Authorized Lives in Early Christian Biography* (Cambridge, 2008), and the article by Jennott and Pagels, "Antony's Letters," who notice that while Athanasius, e.g., portrays Anthony as almost illiterate, and as concerned with submission to the clergy and the canon of the church, the picture that emerges from Anthony's own letters is quite different (570–571; *contra* E. Wipszycka, *Moins et communautés monastiques en Égypte* [Warsaw, 2009], ch. 4). A not substantially different, but somehow less dichotomic view is reflected in P.R. Kolbet, "Athanasius, the Psalms, and the Reformation of the Self," *Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006) 85–101, who underlines Athanasius's role in the introduction of the contemplative traditions of desert monasticism into Alexandria and for the integration of monasticism into the communion with the Alexandrian bishopric. See also D. Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (New York, 1995), and A. Urbano, "'Read it Also to the Gentiles': the Displacement and Recasting of the Philosopher in the *Vita Antonii*," *Church History* 77 (2008) 877–914, who stresses that Athanasius with his biography of Anthony wanted to present Egyptian monasticism as an alternative to the classical philosophical life for learned Christians. Athanasius's exhortation to read his biography of Anthony to the gentiles as well is meaningful in this respect. He was ideally following the path of Origen, after all.

<sup>76</sup> Athanasius's admiration for Anthony is emphasised especially by H. Dörries, "Die *Vita Antonii* als Geschichtsquelle," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* (1949) 359–410.

<sup>77</sup> See below, Ch. 3, section on Didymus.

<sup>78</sup> See above in this same chapter, section on Dionysius.

Father, an “anti-Arian” doctrine that he obviously appreciates, and manifests respect for his commitment and industriousness (φιλόπονος) and for his heuristic method. Athanasius is aware that Origen expressed many ideas as a result of his zetetic work, which is very different from a dogmatic expression. In this way, Athanasius also acts as an apologist, defending Origen from current criticisms against him, at the same time as he quotes his words as authoritative in support of his own position:

Origen the hardworking wrote some things for the sake of research [ζητῶν] and exercise [γυμνάζων]: let nobody consider these things to be expressions of his own thought [...] for those who seek quarrels he says something in the spirit of research [ἐν τῷ ζητεῖν]. But the Hardworking's own thought is what he states as a definition [ὡς ὀρίζων ἀποφαίνεται]. Now, after saying a few things as in an exercise [ὡς ἐν γυμνασίᾳ], against the heretics, he immediately adds his own thought.<sup>79</sup>

And Athanasius goes on to report, as authoritative, Origen's words on the coeternity of the Son with the Father. In *De decr. Nic. syn.* 25,<sup>1</sup> Athanasius also praises Theognostus, a faithful Origenian,<sup>80</sup> for maintaining that the Son was born from the οὐσία of the Father. This position does not surprise in Theognostus, given that it is the same as Origen's. Likewise, in his fourth letter to Serapion, while considering Origen's and Theognostus's interpretation of Matt 12:31–32, Athanasius praises Origen as “the most learned and active writer among the ancient,” apparently meaning among the Christian authors who lived before Athanasius himself. Indeed, the Byzantine theologian Gobar, too, as I mentioned, attests that Athanasius exalted both Origen and Theognostus in many passages (*ap. Phot. Bibl. cod.* 232, p. 291b).<sup>81</sup> Socrates testifies (*HE* 6,13) that Athanasius was a “praiser” of Origen, since he regarded him as “wondrous” (θαυμαστός) and most hardworking [φιλοπονώτατος],” and that in his *Discourses against the Arians* he adduced Origen's words in defence of the faith in the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father.<sup>82</sup>

Athanasius went close to Origen also in his own thought in some respects, although he was far from having Origen's philosophical skills and learning. His thought, however, is fairly coherent<sup>83</sup> and did absorb many elements

<sup>79</sup> See my “Origen's Anti-Subordinationism.”

<sup>80</sup> See above in this same chapter, section on Theognostus.

<sup>81</sup> Ὀριγένην καὶ Θεόγνωστον [...] ἐν πολλοῖς ἀπεδέχετο λόγοις.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. W.A. Bienert, “Athanasius von Alexandrien und Origenes,” in *Studia Patristica* 26 (2003) 360–364; Ramelli, “Origen's Anti-Subordinationism.”

<sup>83</sup> Cf. K. Anatolios, *Athanasius. The Coherence of His Thought* (London, 1998).



from Origen. For instance, Athanasius's postulation of Christ's human soul (*Tom. ad Ant.* 7) is an idea that he shared with Origen. Athanasius's concepts of sin as movement, evil as non-being and non-existent in the beginning, and sin as moving into non-being are all features found in Origen; see for instance *De Incarn.* 4: "Only God exists: evil is non-being; the negation and antithesis of the Good." Above all, Athanasius's soteriology focuses on a notion that was already present in Origen: namely, that Christ's incarnation has a salvific and deifying effect on humanity.<sup>84</sup> The development of this idea is intertwined with the "anti-Arian" polemic and the assumption that Christ is truly God and truly human together. If Christ were only God, or only human, the salvation and deification of humanity would be jeopardised. This set of ideas underlies many passages of Athanasius, such as *Adv. Ar.* 1,38; 2,70; *Ep. ad Adelph.* 4. Athanasius repeats again and again that Christ became human ("inhumanation" is the correct rendering of ἐν-ανθρώπησις in the title of his *De incarnatione*) in order for humanity to be deified.<sup>85</sup> The most concise expression of this notion is found in *Incarn.*

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<sup>84</sup> The *Contra gentes De Incarnatione*, two works considered as a unity, is the main witness to his theology of incarnation. See U. Heil, "Athanasius als Apologet des Christentums: Einleitungsfragen zum Doppelwerk *Contra gentes/De incarnatione*," in *Three Greek Apologists: Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius*, eds. A.-C. Jacobsen–J. Ulrich (Bern, 2007), 159–187; Ch. Kanengiesser, "The Dating of Athanasius' Double Apology and Three Treatises against the Arians," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 10 (2006) 19–33, who observes that it is impossible to verify that Athanasius's *Contra Gentes De Incarnatione* was published during his lifetime. Christopher Beeley, in the chapter he devotes to Athanasius in *The Unity of Christ. Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven, 2012: I am grateful to him for sharing it with me for comments long before publication), rightly emphasises Origen's influence on Athanasius's *Contra gentes De Incarnatione*, also observing that Athanasius's "philosophy" is likely to have been entirely mediated by Origen and Eusebius. Beeley also highlights the strong dualism of Athanasius's Christology and an intrinsic contradiction between maintaining the divinity of the Logos and denying its role as mediator. Had Athanasius received a Middle or Neoplatonic formation, his view—I suspect—would have been different. On Athanasius's Christology see also J.M. Robertson, *Christ as Mediator: A Study of the Theologies of Eusebius of Caesarea, Marcellus of Ancyra and Athanasius of Alexandria* (Oxford–New York, 2007); S. Zañartu, "El logos en el *De Incarnatione Verbi* de Atanasio: una primera aproximación," *Teología y Vida* 48 (2007) 261–301, who studies Athanasius's *De Incarnatione Verbi* in relation to his *Contra gentes De Incarnatione*; X. Morales, *La théologie trinitaire d'Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 2006).

<sup>85</sup> See especially the rich chapter devoted to Athanasius by M.C. Steenberg, *Of God and Man. Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (London, 2009), 158 ff., who endeavours to counterbalance modern negative evaluations of Athanasius. His point is that Athanasius's theology and his final adhesion to the ὁμοούσιος idea (i.e., that the Son must possess naturally the attributes of the Father) derive from his anthropology, and that he counters the "Arian" position essentially on account of an anthropological impossibility: while a created Son could be divine and life only by participation, in fact the Son gives life without receiving it, which no creature can do.

54,3: Christ “was made a human being, that we might be made God [θεοποιηθῶμεν].”<sup>86</sup> This is an Origenian idea, which also has roots in Irenaeus: Christ became what we are to bring us to what he is (*Ref.* 3 *praef.*). In Athanasius, it returns in *Adv. Ar.* PG 26,397,21: “Just as the Lord, by assuming our body, became a human being, so are we humans deified [θεοποιούμεθα] by the Logos, assumed in its flesh, and for the future we inherit life in the world to come.” A more articulated formulation of the same concept is the following:

He was born a human being to make us *divine* in himself. And he was born from a woman, a virgin, to transfer upon himself our birth affected by error, that we might become a holy nation, participating in the divine nature [...] Flesh was taken up by the Logos to *liberate all humans* [πάντας ἀνθρώπους] and *resurrect all of them* [πάντας] from the dead and *ransom all of them from sin* [...]. The Logos becomes flesh to become in it a *mediator* of the access to God for us, that we may inhabit the heavenly abodes.

The universalistic tones of this passage should be noticed; Athanasius proclaims not only the resurrection of the bodies of all human beings, but also the liberation of the souls of all humans from sin. This is very close to Origen's notion of spiritual resurrection,<sup>87</sup> and of course Origen too had a universalistic concept of this resurrection. The same universalistic orientation is found *ibid.* col. 1081:

The Logos became a human being for the sake of *our salvation* [...] in order to *set free all beings* [τὰ πάντα] *in himself*, to lead the cosmos to the Father and to *pacify all beings* [τὰ πάντα] in himself, in heaven and on earth.

Athanasius (*ibid.* 1077A) substantiates this universalism by means of St. Paul's assertion in Phil 2:10 that every knee will bow in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld, and each one will proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father. This was one of Origen's favourite quotations in support of the universal nature of apokatastasis, since he interpreted the submission described there as voluntary and, consequently, as a sign of conversion and salvation.

The above-mentioned notion of both physical and spiritual resurrection of all humanity (the latter coinciding with the purification from sin) made

<sup>86</sup> R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh, 1988), 450, even observed that the centrality of incarnation in Athanasius's *De Incarnatione* would seem to make redemption unnecessary.

<sup>87</sup> See my “Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah: Resurrection Announced throughout the Bible and its Twofold Conception,” *Augustinianum* 48 (2008) 59–78.

possible by Christ<sup>88</sup> is found again, with very clear expressions, in *Tom. ad Ant.* 7 and in *Adv. Ar.* PG 26,112, which read respectively as follows:

[Christ] was born as a human being for our own sake; in himself he has *liberated humanity from sin, completely and entirely*, and *has vivified it* from the state of death in which it was lying, and has it enter the Kingdom of Heavens.<sup>89</sup>

The Lord became a human being in order to *transform us from mortal to immortal* and to have us *enter the Kingdom of Heavens* in the world to come, [because thanks to him we have been] *liberated from sin* [ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμαρτίας].

The Logos, by becoming mortal, could defeat death and restore humanity to immortality, reconstituting the knowledge of God and the image of God in the human being.<sup>90</sup> In *Incarn.* 8–9 Athanasius remarks as follows: Christ “underwent corruption together with us and yet did not suffer the power of death, that what had been called to existence *should not perish* and thus his Father’s work for the human being should not be in vain [...]. We were all subject to corruption coming from death, and he delivered his own body to death *on behalf of all* [ἀντὶ πάντων] [...] *in order to bring again to incorruptibility the human beings* now doomed to corruption [...] *having death disappear from them* as chaff devoured by fire.” The argument that what God has called to existence must not perish is typically Origenian; Origen used it in reference to the eventual restoration of the devil.<sup>91</sup> The notion that evil and death must be devoured by fire was developed by Origen in the sense that fire will destroy, not sinners, but their sins, and thereby provide the sinners’ purification. In 19,3 Athanasius—just as Eusebius, who followed Origen—describes Christ as the “Saviour of all,” Σωτὴρ πάντων.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> The Saviour is Christ and God. See J. McGuckin, “*Soter Theos*. The Patristic and Byzantine Reappropriation of an Antique Idea,” in *Salvation According to the Fathers of the Church*, eds. V. Twomey–D. Krausmüller (Dublin, 2010), 33–44.

<sup>89</sup> *Athanasius Werke*, II, *Die Apologien*, eds. H.C. Brennecke–U. Heil–A. von Stockhausen (Berlin, 2006), 347.

<sup>90</sup> Athanasius does not seem to draw a sharp and consistent distinction between “image” and “likeness” (the image of God present in every human being from the creation and the likeness to be acquired afterwards); cf., e.g., *Adv. Pag.* 2 and 34; *Incarn.* 11. Neither is a consistent and clear image–likeness distinction found in Gregory of Nyssa, although he is a close follower of Origen.

<sup>91</sup> See above, Ch. 1, the section on Origen.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *Adv. Ar.* 1,45.48.50; 3,25; 2,59.69. *Ep. ad Serap.* 3,6. In his Letter to Dracontius as well, Athanasius often calls Christ “Saviour” and mentions the salvific nature of his sacrifice.

That corruption *may disappear from all* [ἀπὸ πάντων] forever, thanks to the resurrection [...] *He has paid for all* [ὑπὲρ πάντων], in death, all that was owed [...] This glorious deed truly *becomes God's goodness to the highest degree* [πρέπον δὲ καὶ μάλιστα τῇ ἀγαθότητι τοῦ Θεοῦ] [...] *He set right* [διωρθώσατο] *their neglectfulness* by means of his teaching, *having rectified* [κατορθώσας] *all human things* [πάντα τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων] *by means of his power*.

St. Paul is quoted soon after: Christ died “for the sake of all,” ὑπὲρ πάντων. Neglectfulness as a description of sin is typically Origenian; Origen described sin as caused by laziness and neglect of one's own soul and eternal good (for instance in *Princ.* 3,5,8: “the whole world will submit to the Father, not by violence or necessity [...] but by means of the *logos*, of teaching, of the emulation of the best [...] and also of threats, if deserved and fitting: these are rightly addressed to those who *neglect the care of their own utility and salvation*”; *ibid.* 4,6,2: “If they *neglect* their participation because of their own *laziness*, some sooner and some later, some more and some less, they become the cause of their own fall”; *ibid.* 4,4,10: “due to *laziness*, the intelligence loses its capacity for receiving God in itself in a pure and integral way”; *ibid.* 1,8,2: “the cause of the diversity and variety among creatures depends on their movements, quicker or *lazier*, toward the Good or toward evil”). Also, that restoration depends on God's goodness (ἀγαθότης, *bonitas*), which is affirmed in Athanasius's passage and means God's being the absolute Good, is *Origen's* view, which was taken over by several of his followers, including Augustine in his anti-Manichaean phase.<sup>93</sup> Athanasius also has it; for this reason, he also avers that the Incarnation has taken place “thanks to the love and *goodness* of God the Father, for the salvation of us humans [...] the salvation of the world has been performed by the same Logos who has created it” (*De Incarn.* ch. 1). And he joins this notion with another Origenian notion: that of what becomes God as a criterion to establish truths pertaining to the history of salvation and eschatology. This is also an idea of Origen's and will return in Rufinus.<sup>94</sup> The argument from what becomes God's goodness is brought forward by Athanasius also in *De Incarn.* ch. 6, in which he remarks that it would be unworthy of the goodness of God that “creatures, which are his work, should be reduced to nothing by the deception of the devil.” The concept of restoration as a rectification, a setting right of what had gone wrong, a διόρθωσις and κατόρθωσις that will take place by means of teaching and illumination, is also typically Origenian and returns

<sup>93</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on Augustine.

<sup>94</sup> See below, Ch. 3, section on Rufinus, and above, Ch. 1, section on Origen; see also below, the conclusions.

in thinkers who supported the doctrine of apokatastasis and were strongly influenced by Origen, such as Marcellus of Ancyra and Eusebius.<sup>95</sup> In their writings this notion is indeed closely related to the concept of the eventual universal apokatastasis.

In Chapter 10 of *De Incarnatione* Athanasius introduces the notion of restoration proper and, like Origen, has the restoration of humanity depend on Christ, who, “through his own power, has *restored the whole human nature*.” In this connection, Athanasius cites 1 Cor 15:21–22: “just as *all* die in Adam, so will *all* have life in Christ” with “the general resurrection of all,” as Athanasius glosses; “now, indeed, we do *not die* any longer *as condemned*,” ὡς κατακρινόμενοι. In the same direction goes the quotation of 1 Cor 15:53 ff. on the final eviction of death. It is crucial to consider the holistic notion of resurrection, not only bodily, but also spiritual. Moreover, what Athanasius says in *De inc.* 43, that the Lord has come “to heal and teach,” is in line with the concept, dear to Clement and Origen, of Christ-Logos as Physician and Teacher. These functions of Christ provided, in their view, an important foundation for the eventual apokatastasis. The notion of restoration is blended, in Athanasius, with that of renovation: in 16,4–5 Christ’s sacrifice is “the sacrifice offered for all [ὑπὲρ πάντων],” which “had death disappear from us and renovated us” (ἀνεκαίνιζεν ἡμᾶς). The Logos renovates humans and makes them new creatures through the communication of its Spirit. Qua Logos, Christ bestows the Father’s goods; qua human, he receives them and thus joins humanity to God. The aim and effect of Christ’s sacrifice is “that death might be destroyed once and for all, and human beings might be *renewed* according to the image of God” (*De Incarn.* 13). Consistently, Athanasius speaks of a recreation, given that the Logos is the creator of human beings: Christ “has banished death from us and has *created us anew*,” bringing the knowledge of God everywhere, even “in the abyss, in Hades” (*De Incarn.* 16 and 45). Like Origen, Athanasius too is convinced that all humanity and the angels who have transgressed need the grace of the Logos to be saved (*Ep. ad Afr.* 7).

In ch. 3 Athanasius states that all rational beings, who bear the stamp of its image, “share in the rationality of the Logos itself, so that, by reflecting it and becoming *logikoi* and an expression of the Mind of God just as the Logos is, they may continue forever in the blessed life, the only true life, of the blessed in paradise.” As Athanasius remarks in ch. 4, “it was the

<sup>95</sup> See my “*In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* (1 Cor 15,27–28): Gregory of Nyssa’s Exegesis, its Derivations from Origen, and Early Patristic Interpretations Related to Origen’s,” in *Studia Patristica* XLIV, eds. J. Baun–A. Cameron–M. Edwards–M. Vinzent (Leuven, 2010), 259–274.

human fall that induced the Logos to descend; our transgression attracted its love for us, so that he rushed to help us [...] and for the sake of our salvation, in its immense love, he was born and manifested itself in a human body." The very definition of God as "Life itself" in ch. 21 reminds readers of Origen's analogous expression. Athanasius is clear about the universal scope of Christ's sacrifice in *De Incarn.* 8–9, a point on which Origen insisted a great deal:<sup>96</sup> "He handed his own body to death *for the sake of all* [...] *in order to drive back to incorruptibility* the human beings who had turned to corruptibility [...] in order to stop the corruptibility of *all the other human beings* [...] *for the life of all* [...] through this union of the immortal Son of God with the mortal human nature, *all human beings* have been covered with incorruptibility, in the promise of the resurrection."<sup>97</sup> The dynamics of the salvation provided by Christ through the liberation of humanity from transgression is explained by Athanasius in *De Incarn.* 20: "He offered the sacrifice *for all* [...] handing his 'temple' to death *for all* [...] in order to liberate the human being from its first transgression [...] in the body of the Lord the death of all took place: but because the Logos was there, in this act death and corruption were completely abolished." "The body that he first offered *for all* and which he transformed into a way to heaven" (*De Incarn.* 25); "he assumed a body for the salvation of us all" (*ibid.* 32).

"The destruction of death and its defeat thanks to the cross" (*De Incarn.* 27; cf. 30, 32, etc.) is not so much the destruction of *physical* death, which was present both before and after Christ's sacrifice, but the destruction of *spiritual* death, which endures in the world to come. Of course in 1 Cor 15:26 Athanasius found the affirmation of the destruction of death, which Origen considered as spiritual death (*mors animae*, in *Comm. in Rom.* 5,7). Athanasius reflects on Christ's salvific role and reveals Origen's influence in his "festal letters" as well.<sup>98</sup> He repeatedly echoes<sup>99</sup> Origen's spiritual exegesis of the Easter as it appears in Origen's *De Pascha*, and from Letter 1 onwards Athanasius focuses on the "intelligible Easter" as a passage to God. Indeed, he follows Origen's etymology of Πάσχα as "passage"—according to the Hebrew

<sup>96</sup> See I. Ramelli, "The Universal and Eternal Validity," 210–221.

<sup>97</sup> "He has waited for death in order to *put an end to it*, [...] as an offering for all" (*De Incarn.* 22).

<sup>98</sup> These range over a wide span of time: from 329 to 373 CE, and are preserved in Greek fragments, plus Syriac and Coptic. Edition of the Syriac version of the letters: W. Cureton, *The Festal Letters of Athanasius* (London, 1848; Piscataway 2003 reprint), from a single ms. written in Edessa in 411 CE, thus less than forty years after these letters were written by Athanasius.

<sup>99</sup> *Epp.* 5; 24; 25 etc.

meaning of the word—and not the alternative, widespread etymology of Πάσχα from πάσχω, “I suffer.” Like Origen, Athanasius too considers the reading and meditation of Scripture—which Origen identified with the “body of Christ”—to be a eucharistic act and a spiritual nourishment (*Ep.* 1,5; 28,11). When in Letters 5 and 24,16 and 14,1–3 Athanasius speaks of an uninterrupted spiritual Easter, this seems to be a reminiscence of Origen’s definition of a “life in continual accord with the divine Logos” as a “perfect and uninterrupted feast” in CC 8,22–23. Indeed, the theme of the eternal feast and eternal permanence in Christ, who is a feast and a solemnity, occurs often in these letters. Like Origen in *Comm. in Io.* 10.67–111, Athanasius envisages three levels of Easter: the Hebrew Passover, Christ’s Easter, and the Easter in the world to come (for instance, Letter 1,10; 45). In Letter 1,2–3 Athanasius focuses again on soteriology, introducing the idea of the “opportune time” in which the activities of divine pedagogy and providential care take place (“that in every place in an opportune time salvation may spread for humans”), adding to the *Christus Medicus* theme the notion that Christ’s various operations are performed at the opportune times: “Like a good physician, aware of the unique time in which those who are healed will listen to him, he operates for our salvation, not out of time, but at the right time.” Athanasius links this motif of *Christus Medicus* to the idea of God’s immense love, supported by a famous Isaiah quotation, in 29,17:

He cures us like a good physician, and *there cannot be cure without suffering* [...] Even if a mother could ever forget her own children, I shall not forget [...] *God’s love is by far greater* than that of human beings [...] While we are dead, he resuscitates us and brings us to heaven.

Suffering is not connected with a retributive punishment, but with healing, in Origen’s line, and again in Origen’s line resurrection is also conceived of as spiritual. And it depends on Christ; this is why Easter is defined “the salvific feast” (1,7; 13,1). Athanasius adapts 1 Cor 15:28—Origen’s favourite quotation in support of the apokatastasis doctrine—and 1 Cor 9:22 to Christ’s work and mercy: “Christ is all to all *and has mercy upon all* in his love for humanity.”

Athanasius does not limit himself to proclaiming the defeat of death (the consequence of sin), which might be taken as a reference simply to the resurrection of the body, but he also emphasises the defeat of Satan, which clearly also implies liberation from sin: “*The devil*, the tyrant of the world, has been killed” (4,1,3); “Death does no longer dominate, but instead of death there is now Life, so that everything has been filled with joy and happiness [...] *Death and the kingdom of the devil* have been abolished” (4,2,3

and 4,3,4); "Now that we pass from earth to heaven, *Satan*, like a lightning, falls down from heaven" (24,17, with a reminiscence of Luke 10:18). Christ "has abolished death and *the one who has the power of death*" (7,26). In 19,6 Athanasius stresses that Christ "went down to the dead qua Life" and "overwhelmed the whole army of the devil [...] neither death nor life [...] nor any other creature will ever be able to separate us from the love of God." "Thanks to the Saviour's death, *hell has been trodden*; he has opened the gates of heaven by paving a way without obstacles to those who go up [...] instead of hell, the Kingdom of Heavens" (5,3,5). The most explicit reference is probably found in 10,10,23: Christ "has redeemed from death and *liberated from hell all humanity*." Indeed, in 43,20, not accidentally, Athanasius quotes Jesus's words in John: "When I am lifted up from earth, *I shall attract all people to myself*." The same universalistic tone is perceptible in 6,4,9–10; 27,24: "He died *for all* [...] to abolish death with his blood [...] he *has gained the whole humanity*"; "the totality of the peoples has entered, so that *every human* be saved." The resurrection of all humans in the end will be not only the resurrection of the body, but also a spiritual resurrection, implying the elimination of evil, that is to say, Origen's tenet concerning the *telos*:

Our Saviour's death has *liberated the world*. By his wounds *all of us have been healed* [...] He has resurrected us from the dead, after abolishing death [...] Which joy will there be for *the total abolition of sin* and the *resurrection of the dead*? (6,9,21–10,23)

In the passages I have quoted from Athanasius, the notions of physical and spiritual resurrection are both present, just as they were in Origen;<sup>100</sup> this, of course, is rich in soteriological implications. In 27,19 Athanasius interestingly comments on the parable of Dives and Lazarus—the same on which Origen and Methodius comment in their *De resurrectione* and Gregory of Nyssa in his *De anima et resurrectione*—and states that during the final Judgement sinners will repent. In fact, Athanasius thinks that it is Christ who helps sinners to repent (*ep.* 13,2,6). As Origen also thought, Christ's providential action does not contradict human free will, but at the same time it does not fail to reach its goal:

It does not force one's will beyond what is possible, and love does not address only the perfect, but it descends among those who are in a middle position, and even among those who come third, in sum in such a way as to *redeem all human beings to salvation* [...] *The enemy is chased outside*, and all of its army is thrown to the outer side. (10,4,8–9)

<sup>100</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah."



All humans are saved by Christ, according to Athanasius's observations in this passage. In Christ's cross there is "the salvation of all humans in all places." In 24,<sup>21</sup> the feast is for the abandoning of sin, and this depends on Christ's work. Indeed, in 14,<sup>2,5</sup> Athanasius emphasises that Christ "takes away the sins of the world and also purifies our souls," and in 14,<sup>3,15</sup> he insists that Christ has defeated evil; the soteriological implication of this is obvious: Christ, "who is everything for us, also becomes responsible for our salvation in myriads of ways" (14,<sup>4,16</sup>), and in turn God "caused the sacrifice of his Son with a view to salvation" (5,<sup>2,3</sup>). Athanasius in 6,<sup>7,16</sup> even declares that those who are cursed by the Lord can have his mercy, and will be inserted anew once they have abandoned their incredulity.<sup>101</sup> But it is Christ-Logos that kindles faith in people (7,<sup>7,26</sup>). One of the most important passages in this connection is in 3,<sup>4,8</sup>:

Christ, because he is good and loves humanity, came to bring fire onto earth [...] He wanted the repentance and conversion of the human being rather than its death. In this way, *evilness, all of it, will be burnt away from all human beings.*

This will happen either in this world or in the next world, with fire (§ 9). If all human beings are purified from evilness, this means that they will be finally in communion with God and saved.

Athanasius's anti-Arianism, too, is perfectly in line with his appreciation of Origen, who was certainly not a precursor of Arianism as he has been depicted both during the Origenist controversy and still in modern times. The opposite is rather the case, and I have argued elsewhere that Origen's thought even lies behind the credal formula of Nicaea (ὁμοούσιος) and that so-called of Constantinople (μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις).<sup>102</sup> Origen contrasted the "subordinationists" of his day, as Athanasius knew very well, and especially the "Gnostics." Origen's very doctrine of apokatastasis was elaborated in defence of Christian orthodoxy against Valentinian Gnosticism, as I have suggested.<sup>103</sup>

Finally, an accurate analysis of the terminology of eternity in Athanasius, which I have undertaken in a separate monograph,<sup>104</sup> is significant, all the more so in that the controversy over Arianism, in which Athanasius

<sup>101</sup> Origen in *Comm. in Matt.* 16,26–29 interpreted the same parable as indicating universal salvation.

<sup>102</sup> See my "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism."

<sup>103</sup> Ramelli, "La coerenza," 661–688.

<sup>104</sup> Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 157–172.

played a leading role, contributed greatly to the precision of the Christian vocabulary concerning eternity, the consequences of which are particularly evident not only in Athanasius, but also in Gregory of Nyssa and his brother Basil. The occurrences of the term *ἄϊδιος*, which indicates absolute eternity, abundantly surpass those of the more polysemic *αἰώνιος*, prevalently used in quotations or echoes of Scripture. Both adjectives together form a very large number of occurrences, and Athanasius's usage appears conscious and precise. The adjective *ἄϊδιος* refers almost exclusively to the eternity of God, and in this case it indicates absolute eternity; it refers also to intelligible things and creatures that are eternal; their eternity is less absolute than that of God, but they are nevertheless eternal in contrast with the material world. The more variegated term *αἰώνιος* is employed by Athanasius in scriptural quotations referring to God—in which case, and *only* in this, it means “eternal,” because of the nature of God—or in other expressions of the Septuagint where it means “ancient” or “of long duration,” and especially in reference to life and punishment in the world to come. Now, it is meaningful that of punishment or death or fire in the future world it is never stated by Athanasius that they will be strictly eternal. He *never* describes these as *ἄϊδια*, but only as *αἰώνια*, in perfect conformity with Scripture and Origen. Thus, for instance, in his festal letter 7,2,6–7 Athanasius speaks of the Judgment, to be sure, and of the condemnation of impious people to death—just as Origen also did—, but he does not aver that this death will be eternal. In his festal letter 7,9,31, on the contrary, Athanasius refers to Luke 15:32 on the return to life from spiritual death; Athanasius comments on this passage as follows: “This is the work of the Father's love for humanity and goodness, which not only has people rise again to life from the dead, but makes also grace splendid by means of the Spirit [...] by *regenerating the human beings in the image of Christ's glory*.”

Athanasius quotes Jesus's words, “go away from me, into the *αἰώνιον* fire” (*Exp. in Ps.* PG 27,64,3). He presents these words as a “threat,” and yet a threat that it is good to take into consideration (this was also Origen's opinion); for, “those who will hear these words addressed to themselves will fall down, and rightly so, given that they have not adhered steadfastly to Christ, who is the solid basis of believers.” According to Athanasius, it is good to believe that threat, but not even in this threat is punishment in fire declared to be eternal. Athanasius, in conformity with Scripture, does not describe that fire as *ἄϊδιον*. He uses *αἰώνιον*, and that he interprets this term as “belonging to the world to come” and not as “eternal” is patent from *ibid.* 92,28–31, where he glosses the Biblical statement, “the Lord will reign *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*,” with “in the future and new world” (*ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι καὶ*

νέω αἰῶνι). Athanasius goes on to comment on the words that immediately follow in the Psalm: “Nations, go away from his land.” This is Athanasius’s interpretation: “Indeed, during the reign of Christ they will be cast into the fire of the world to come [τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον]; Scripture calls ‘nations’ the iniquitous, because they do not live according to the law, but savagely, like pagans and barbarians. Of these people Scripture requires the exclusion, saying: ‘Go ruin’, and addressing them with a dreadful threat.” Athanasius’s reference to Christ’s eschatological reign refers to 1 Cor 15:24–28, in which Paul foresees that Christ during his reign will subject all the enemies; the last enemy, death, will be, not submitted, but eliminated, after which Christ will hand all beings to the Father, that God may be “all in all.” Indeed, after citing the aforementioned threat, Athanasius reveals that its aim is, not perdition, but correction, conversion, and life: “that these may revive, and those may correct themselves” (ὥστε καὶ τούτους ἀναπνεύσαι, καὶ καίνοους σωφρονισθῆναι).

In an important passage, Athanasius observes that Christ brings life with himself and his coming is the project that God in his goodness had planned before the creation of the world, already knowing that we would need it. Taking upon himself the whole of humanity, Christ saves it all, and has it participate in the life of the world to come:

It would not have been good that our life be solidly grounded elsewhere than in the Lord, who is before the aeons [αἰῶνες] and by means of whom the aeons have come to existence, that we too might inherit life in the world to come [αἰώνιος], since Life is in the Lord. For God is good, and, being good always, has excogitated this, well knowing the weakness of our nature, which *needs God’s help and salvation* [...] This plan was thought out before the creation of the world and then realised when it was needed and the Saviour dwelt here on earth. The Lord himself, indeed, in heaven *will be all goods for us* [ἀντὶ πάντων ἡμῶν]; he will take us, too, with him, and will bring us to life in the world to come [αἰώνιος]. (Adv. Ar. PG 26,309)

This passage is important both for the terminology of αἰῶνες and αἰώνιος that it displays, and for the Origenian notions with which it bristles, first of all the idea that only God is the Good and is immutable in the Good, while creatures can detach themselves from the Good in their movements of free will. Athanasius clearly refers to 1 Cor 15:28, which he interprets in the same sense as Origen did: God will be “all in all” because God will be all goods, for all.

Athanasius at the end of his *De Incarnatione* recalls Jesus’s Gospel words, that the Judgment will be based on each one’s works and that people will be sent either to αἰώνιος life or to αἰώνιον fire; the latter is tantamount to a condemnation to the “external darkness”:

In his second manifestation, glorious and divine, [Christ] will come, not in humility, but in glory, not in order to suffer, but in order to *bestow upon all of us the fruit of his Cross: resurrection and incorruptibility* [...] judging everybody and all according to the good or evil deeds they performed while they were in the body. So, the good will have the Kingdom of Heavens, while those who do evil will have the external darkness and the fire in the world to come.

This was tranquilly acknowledged by Origen himself, given that αἰώνιος does not mean “eternal” either in the Bible or in Patristic authors such as Origen and Athanasius himself.

### *Marcellus of Ancyra*

Marcellus of Ancyra, a fourth-century anti-Arian,<sup>105</sup> was influenced by Origen, although in some respects he misunderstood his thought, and seems to have displayed an attitude of suspicion toward philosophy.<sup>106</sup> However, given that he was so exaggerated in his anti-Arianism as to fall into the opposite extreme of admitting only one hypostasis in the Trinity, his dependence on Origen is indicative of the unfoundedness of the claim that Origen was

<sup>105</sup> Marcellus may be the author of the *Cohortatio* ascribed to Justin. See C. Riedweg, *Ps. Justin (Markell von Ankyra?) Ad Graecos de vera religione*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1994). For an edition of Marcellus's fragments see M. Vinzent, *Markell von Ankyra: Die Fragmente* (Leiden, 1997). On him see at least G. Feige, *Die Lehre Markells von Ankyra in der Darstellung seiner Gegner* (Leipzig, 1991); K. Seibt, *Die Theologie des Markell von Ankyra* (Berlin, 1994); J.T. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum* (Washington, 1999); S. Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy 325–345* (Oxford, 2006).

<sup>106</sup> Marcellus was profoundly influenced by Origen's thought; however, to avoid accusations of Origenism, he felt the need to criticise him to some extent, at least if we give credit to Eusebius who ascribes to him a description of Origen that comes close to that of Porphyry, well known to Eusebius, and is far from that of Eusebius himself (see my “Origen, Patristic Philosophy” and “Origen's Anti-Subordinationism”). In fr. 88 Klostermann = fr. 22 Seibt/Vinzent, Marcellus says, or is made say by Eusebius for polemical purposes: “And yet, if it is necessary to tell the truth regarding Origen, this is what it is appropriate to say: as soon as he detached himself from the philosophical disciplines, he chose to converse with the divine Scriptures, but before having an accurate grasp of the Bible. At that time, because of his exceeding, zealous learning in pagan culture, he began to write works more quickly than it would have been good, and was led astray by philosophical arguments, because of which he wrote some things incorrectly. And it is clear: since he still remembered Plato's opinions, and the difference among the principles that is found in his writings, he wrote a work Περὶ ἀρχῶν, giving this precise title to his writing. The greatest proof of this is that he took the incipit and title of his book from nowhere else but Plato's very words. For at the beginning he has written as follows: “Those who have believed and those who have been persuaded”. Now, this phrase, in this very form, can be found in Plato's *Gorgias*.” It is no accident that Eusebius was keen on remarking that, while Origen did write a Περὶ ἀρχῶν, Plato never wrote any Περὶ ἀρχῶν, and Origen did not teach the same things as Plato on protology (*C. Marcell.* 1.4,27).

the precursor of Arianism.<sup>107</sup> Marcellus's thought, like Origen's, is eschatologically oriented, and he seems to have been a definite supporter of the apokatastasis doctrine.<sup>108</sup> His exegesis of 1 Cor 15:24–28—Origen's favourite passage in support of the apokatastasis theory—is crucial in this respect. In *De incarn.* 20 Marcellus offers the same interpretation of this passage as Origen, also followed by Gregory of Nyssa, does:

(Paul) is speaking of the submission of the cosmos, which will take place in the flesh of Christ [...] when, he says, all will submit to the Son, we shall find ourselves being his limbs, and thanks to him we shall become children of God [...] Then he himself will submit to the Father *on our behalf, as the head on behalf of his own limbs*. For, as long as all of his limbs have not yet submitted, he himself, who is their head, has not yet submitted to the Father, because he is *waiting for his own limbs* [...] *it is we who submit to the Father in Christ.*

This interpretation of 1 Cor 15:28 is the very same as Origen's (and as Gregory of Nyssa, who drew on Origen on this score): the final submission of Christ to the Father is in fact the submission of all humanity to the Father, since all humanity is Christ's body and its submission will be salvific. Likewise in *De incarn.* 13 Marcellus remarks that Christ, "when he remits his spirit into the hands of the Father, hands himself to God qua human being, in order to hand all humans to God." The equation universal submission = universal salvation is Origen's, who presupposed the voluntary character of this submission.<sup>109</sup> The very notion that Christ is waiting for his body in order to submit (and to be resurrected in the great eschatological resurrection) is Origen's.<sup>110</sup> And in *C. Aster.* fr. 113 Origen's equation between Christ's body and humanity in Christ's eschatological reign before apokatastasis is taken over again, so that Marcellus can affirm that in Christ "the human being, who was once deceived [sc. by the devil], is established as king, by means of the Logos."<sup>111</sup> Also, if the work *De incarnatione et contra Arianos* is

<sup>107</sup> See my "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism."

<sup>108</sup> See Ramelli, "*In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius ...*," 259–274. That Marcellus supported apokatastasis is also recognised by E. Schendel, *Herrschaft und Unterwerfung Christi* (Tübingen, 1971), 127–129; J.T. Lienhard, "The Exegesis of 1 Cor 15,24–28 from Marcellus of Ancyra to Theodoret of Cyrus," *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983) 340–359. On his soteriology see S. Parvis, "Like Some Crown of Victory," in *Salvation According to the Fathers of the Church*, eds. V. Twomey–D. Krausmüller (Dublin, 2010), 60–69.

<sup>109</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section on Origen.

<sup>110</sup> See my "The Trinitarian Theology."

<sup>111</sup> What Lienhard, "The Exegesis," 342–343 finds striking, namely that Marcellus identifies the humanity taken up by the Logos with sinful humanity ("it is precisely fallen humanity that

Marcellus's, a further striking parallel with Origen's interpretation of the eventual submission of the Son to the Father as the eventual submission of humanity and its salvation would emerge, but the attribution of this work is too unsure to be safe to build upon it.<sup>112</sup>

Moreover, Marcellus, like Origen and then Nyssen, conceives of the universal eschatological submission to Christ as a recapitulation, and the restoration of the Logos as the restoration of humanity. He explicitly speaks of universal restoration, ἀποκατάστασις τῶν πάντων, which he also describes as universal rectification, διόρθωσις τῶν πάντων, which is set "after the time of the Judgment," when there takes place "the complete vanishing of every hostile power." The destruction of evil is a fundamental presupposition of the eventual apokatastasis for Marcellus too, just as for Origen and then Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius and other Fathers. Then the Son, too, will submit to the Father, and God will be "all in all."<sup>113</sup>

*Origen's First Opponents According to  
Socrates and Their Lack of Attacks on Apokatastasis*

It is noteworthy that Origen's first opponents according to the list given by Socrates (*HE* 6,13) did not in fact criticise the doctrine of apokatastasis. These opponents are: Methodius, who, as I shall show,<sup>114</sup> endorsed this doctrine; Eustathius of Antioch, who polemicised with Origen on the allegorical interpretation of the episode of the witch of Endor and seems to have followed Methodius in his simplification of Origen's doctrine of the resurrection;<sup>115</sup> Apollinaris of Laodicea, who disagreed with Origen on Christology

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was joined to the Word"), is in fact Origen's notion that Christ's humanity, "the body of Christ," is all of humanity, with all the soteriological and eschatological implications of this concept. See Ramelli, "Clement's Notion of the Logos," the sections devoted to Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.

<sup>112</sup> Discussion of the parallel with Origen (and Gregory of Nyssa, who also relies on Origen) and of the problem of the attribution of the *De Incarnatione* to Marcellus in my "The Trinitarian Theology."

<sup>113</sup> See my *"In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius ... (1 Cor 15,27–28)."*

<sup>114</sup> See below in this same chapter, the very next section devoted to Methodius.

<sup>115</sup> Edition: *Eustathii Antiocheni patris Nicaeni opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. J.H. Dierckx, CCSG 51 (Turnhout, 2002); translations of the controversy on the witch of Endor: *Origene, Eustazio, Gregorio di Nissa, La Maga di Endor*, ed. M. Simonetti (Florence, 1989); R.A. Greer–M. Mitchell, *The "Belly-Myther" of Endor* (Atlanta, 2007). Cf. M. Spanneut, "Eustathe d'Antioche exégète," in *Studia Patristica* VII, 549–559; E. Prinzivalli, "Ψυχὰς ἐξ Ἀδου μεταπέμπεσθαι," *Augustinianum* 35 (1995) 676–706; Eadem, *Magister*, Ch. 4; J.W. Trigg,

and anthropology, but not on apokatastasis,<sup>116</sup> and Theophilus of Alexandria, who was in fact an Origenian and to whose ambiguous and opportunistic approach to Origen's thought I shall return more in detail later on. I shall show that, even when he deemed it useful to blame Origen's ideas, he did not at all criticise the theory of the apokatastasis of all human beings.

For all of these four, Socrates proposes a psychological and moral, rather than doctrinal, explanation for their attacks upon Origen which contradicted one another:

Those who have poor capabilities and are unable to make themselves illustrious by mean of their own faculties would like to acquire fame by criticising those who are better than they are. This passion affected first Methodius [...] then Eustathius [...] then Apollinaris, and finally Theophilus. This is the quartet of defamers who calumniated [διέβαλον] Origen. But they did not proceed in the same way. For each of them blamed him because of a different doctrine; therefore, they clearly show that each of them accepted without problem all that he did not criticise.

Indeed, Pamphilus, Eusebius, the early Jerome, and Rufinus confirm that an important role in the opposition to Origen was played by envy, hostilities, and all sorts of misunderstandings. Origen himself, in his letters and in other works, even homilies,<sup>117</sup> laments that he was misunderstood, envied, and hated.

Socrates of Constantinople was active in the first half of the fifth century, under Theodosius II, but he was not a court historian. He was a layman, strongly admired Origen, and knew Evagrius's work, from which he

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"Eustathius of Antioch's Attack on Origen: What is at Issue in an Ancient Controversy?" *Journal of Religion* 75 (1995) 219–238; M. Mitchell, "Patristic Rhetoric on Allegory: Origen and Eustathius Put 1 Samuel 28 on Trial," *Journal of Religion* 85 (2005) 414–445 on the rhetorical schools' influence on both Eustathius and Origen. Eadem, "Rhetorical Handbooks in Service of Biblical Exegesis," in *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context*, ed. J. Fotopoulos (Leiden, 2006), 5,1. See also J.F. Dechow, "Origen's 'Heresy'; from Eustathius to Epiphanius," in *Origeniana IV*, 405–409.

<sup>116</sup> His anthropology was based on Melito; see T. Orlandi, "La tradizione di Melitone in Egitto e l'omelia *De anima et corpore*," *Augustinianum* 37 (1997) 37–50, *praes.* 41. Moreover, as is indicated by Didymus's criticisms in his Toura papyri, Apollinaris rejected Biblical allegoresis.

<sup>117</sup> E.g. *Hom. in Ier.* 14,14: "It is little surprise if one who wants to imitate the life of the prophets reproaching and admonishing sinners is *calumniated, hated*, and made the *victim of plots*"; 1,14: "God's Logos knows the risks that the ministers of the Logos run with their public: if they rebuke, they are hated; if they chastise, they are persecuted. Prophets *undergo all sorts of oppression*: 'A prophet is not *despised* but in *his own homeland* and his home' [Matt 13:57], as I have remembered also recently." Of course Origen was also thinking of his own persecution in Alexandria.

quotes passages (*HE* 3,7; 4,23).<sup>118</sup> I shall refer afterwards to his account of Theotimus's defence of Origen against Epiphanius in *HE* 6,12,4.<sup>119</sup> Socrates is not the only Christian historian who was philo-Origenian; two others were at least Eusebius and Rufinus; we may also add Sozomen,<sup>120</sup> who, besides emphasising Theotimus's episode, mentions some details of Evagrius's life in *HE* 6,30, and Palladius, if we consider him a historian.<sup>121</sup>

The first two authors who, according to Socrates' account, criticised Origen, Methodius and Eustathius, were active largely before the so-called Arian crisis (although Eustathius, bishop of Antioch in 325–330, offers an account of Nicaea that is interesting to compare with that of Eusebius<sup>122</sup>). To Methodius I shall devote the next section; as for Eustathius, who seems to have had some philosophical education,<sup>123</sup> his polemic, as I have mentioned, is very restricted from the thematic point of view and has nothing to

<sup>118</sup> Cf. G.F. Chesnut, "Kairos and Cosmic Sympathy in the Church Historian Socrates Scholasticus," *Church History* 44,2 (1975) 161–166; Idem, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius* (Paris, 1977) *praes.* 167 ff.; H. Leppin, *Von Constantin dem Großen zu Theodosius II* (Göttingen, 1996); M. Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates: Untersuchungen zu Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode und Person* (Göttingen, 1997); Th. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople. Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor, 1997); H. Leppin, *The Church Historians I*, in *Greek and Roman Historiography. Fourth to Sixth Century*, ed. G. Marasco (Leiden, 2003), 219–254; P. van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété* (Louvain, 2004).

<sup>119</sup> On Socrates' penchant for Origen and his followers see M. Fédou, "L'historien Socrate et la controverse origéniste du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *L'historiographie de l'Église des premiers siècles*, eds. B. Pouderon–Y.-M. Duval (Paris, 2001), 271–280; B. Neuschäfer, "Zur Bewertung des Origenes bei Sokrates," in *Die Welt des Sokrates von Konstantinopel*, Hrg. B. Bäbler–H.-G. Nesselrath (München, 2001), 71–95; Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage*, 37–42; idem, "Two Fragments from the Apology for Origen in the Church History of Socrates Scholasticus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 56 (2005) 103–114; Socrates in *HE* 3,7,5–10 and 4,27,3–6 quotes two fragments from Pamphilus's and Eusebius's apology, but he may have had an interpolated Origenistic version of it.

<sup>120</sup> See Chesnut, *Histories*, Chs. 7–8; C.N. Tsirpanlis, "The Origenistic Controversy in the Historians of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Centuries," *Augustinianum* 26 (1986) 177–183.

<sup>121</sup> See below, Ch. 3, the section devoted to Palladius.

<sup>122</sup> The account is preserved by Theodoret (*HE* 1,7–8). See G.C. Stead, "'Eusebius' and the Council of Nicaea," *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 (1973) 85–100; M. Tetz, "Zur strittigen Frage arianischer Glaubenserklärung auf dem Konzil von Nicaea (325)," in *Logos: Festschrift für L. Abramowski zum 8 Juli 1993*, eds. H.Chr. Brennecke–E.L. Grasmück–Chr. Marksches (Berlin, 1993), 220–238. The followers of Eustathius in Antioch were recognised as the catholic party by Athanasius against the Meletians according to R.P.C. Hanson, "The Source and Significance of the Fourth *Oratio contra Arianos* Attributed to Athanasius," *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988) 257–268. On Eusebius's own account see the analysis in my "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism."

<sup>123</sup> P. de Navascués, "El sustrato filosófico de la obra de Eustacio de Antioquía," *Teología y Vida* 48 (2007) 149–166.



do with apokatastasis. One fragment of his touches upon his soteriology and was certainly in agreement with the Origenian authors: "At Christ's coming, humanity is allowed to enter Paradise" (*De anima* fr. 17).<sup>124</sup>

One consequence of the Arian crisis was certainly a general stiffening in the theological debate, to the detriment of rational research. The boundaries of orthodoxy were restricted, to the disadvantage of a serene evaluation of Origen's zetetic work. Moreover, Origen's name became more and more a label, an object of blame that was not read or known. As I shall illustrate, under Origen's name later doctrines were often criticised and condemned, which had little to do with Origen's own thought. Among these, a doctrine of apokatastasis was eventually condemned which was far from Origen's apokatastasis theory: it depended on a doctrine of the preexistence of souls that Origen had never taught,<sup>125</sup> and on a doctrine of a final θέωσις that was conceived in pantheistic terms. This too was different from Origen's view of the end.

*Methodius, an Origenian Notwithstanding All,  
and a Supporter of Apokatastasis*

Methodius († around 311 CE) is the first of the four earliest opponents of Origen cited by Socrates, but he is a particular opponent, since in fact he was profoundly influenced by Origen, and his criticisms, which are very limited in scope, are mostly due to sheer misunderstanding more than real opposition. Eusebius did not mention Methodius in his history of the Church, and countered him in his lost apology for Origen. This was due to divergences between Methodius and Origen on some points, which however, as I shall show, did not concern the doctrine of apokatastasis. For Methodius, too, seems to have embraced it. Eusebius himself, in fact, attests that Methodius was closely inspired by Origen.<sup>126</sup> In the sixth, lost book of his

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<sup>124</sup> On Eustathius's fragments see J. Zachhuber, "Gregor von Nyssa und das Schisma von Antiochien: zur Interpretation der Schrift *Ad Graecos. Ex communibus notionibus*," *Theologie und Philosophie* 72 (1997) 481–496; Th. Antonopoulou, "Eustathius of Antioch and a fragment attributed to Patriarch Photius," *Journal of Theological Studies* 57 (2006) 546–550 and K.-H. Uthemann, "Eustathios von Antiochien wider den seelenlosen Christus der Arianer: zu neu entdeckten Fragmenten eines Traktats des Eustathios," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 10 (2006) 472–521.

<sup>125</sup> See my "Preexistence of Souls?"

<sup>126</sup> This dependence is demonstrated, in various respects, by E. Prinzivalli, "Aspetti esegetico-dottrinali del dibattito nel IV secolo sulle tesi origeniane in materia escatologica,"

and Pamphilus's apology, as is testified to by Jerome, Eusebius accused Methodius of writing against Origen although he in fact embraced many doctrines of Origen's.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, in several respects, Methodius was not an opponent of Origen; on the contrary, he was deeply influenced by Origen.

In this light, it seems not accidental that a passage of Methodius's *De autexousio*, reported by Eusebius in *PE* 7,19,22, is ascribed to Origen himself by the Philocalists. Moreover, a passage in the *Dialogue of Adamantius*—ascribed to Origen by the redactors of the *Philocalia* and by Rufinus—is very similar to a passage from Methodius's *De autexousio*.<sup>128</sup> Eusebius, however, ascribes his excerpt neither to Methodius nor to Origen, but to a Περὶ ὕλης by a certain "Maximus" who lived far earlier than Methodius did, i.e., in the days of Commodus and Septimius Severus (Eus. *HE* 5,26,1). What emerges from this conundrum, which I have attempted to clarify a little elsewhere,<sup>129</sup> and what is most relevant to the present investigation, is that there is a close connection between Origen's and Methodius's thought, at least concerning free will (but, as I shall show, also on much else). Again, Socrates (*HE* 6,13) attests that Methodius in his last work, *Xenon*, expressed much admiration for Origen. Indeed, Socrates presents this late work of Methodius's as a sort of reconsideration and withdrawal of previous criticism, a palinode.<sup>130</sup> Here, among else, Methodius agrees with Origen on the identification of Wisdom with the ἀρχή in which everything was created (ἀρχὴν δὲ αὐτὴν τὴν Σοφίαν, *ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 235, p. 334a).

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*Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 12 (1995) 279–325, and by I. Ramelli, "L'Inno a Cristo-Logos nel Simposio di Metodio," in *Motivi e forme della poesia cristiana antica* (Rome, 2008), 257–280.

<sup>127</sup> *Ausus est Methodius nunc contra Origenem scribere, qui haec et haec de Origenis dogmatibus est locutus* (C. Ruf. 1,11).

<sup>128</sup> For the complex question of the relationship between Methodius's *De autexousio* and the *Dialogue of Adamantius* see my "The *Dialogue of Adamantius*."

<sup>129</sup> "Maximus on Evil, Matter, and God: Arguments for the Identification of the Source of Eusebius *PE* VII 22," *Adamantius* 16 (2010) 230–255.

<sup>130</sup> L.G. Patterson, "Methodius on Origen in *De creatis*," in *Origeniana V*, 497–508, takes Photius's excerpts from *De creatis* in *Bibl. Cod.* 235 as coming from Methodius's *Xeno* (a character in *De creatis* is named Xenon). The same is the case in his *Methodius of Olympus* (Washington, 1997), in which the last part is dedicated to this lost work. In *De creatis* (Περὶ τῶν γενητῶν, the only testimony of which is Photius) Methodius seems to have denounced, and misunderstood, the κόσμος νοητός in Christ-Logos as coeternal with God: but for Origen this is made of the Ideas or *logoi* of all creatures as thoughts of God, and not of substantial creatures. Provided that Kentauros is, as Photius surmises, a character who represents Origen (in this case, Methodius may have dubbed him so because of what seemed to him the composite nature of Origen's thought: Greek philosophy + Christianity), this person ἐλεγε συναϊδίον εἶναι τῷ Θεῷ τὸ πᾶν.

Methodius's *De autexusio*, which Patterson regards as the first work of Methodius (but the chronology of Methodius's works is very difficult to establish), is a dialogue between a Valentinian and an orthodox Christian. Here Methodius, like Origen before him, fights Valentinian predestinationism, moreover with the very same method as Origen.<sup>131</sup> He argues that evil derives from the gift of free will and is not intrinsic to human nature. Evil does not depend on God, who did not create the human being evil. Methodius uses the selfsame words as Bardaisan—whose work on free will he might have known from the same Greek translation that was subsequently available to Eusebius—in order to explain that, without free will, the human being would be “an instrument in the hands of its Creator” and would be neither blamed nor praised and rewarded for its deeds. It is probable that, as Barnes argued,<sup>132</sup> Methodius in *De autexusio* copied a passage from the original version of the *Dialogue of Adamantius* rather than the other way around, since the dialogue in its earlier form very probably stems from some decades before Methodius. And both the dialogue and Methodius's *De autexusio* are perfectly in line with Origen.

Methodius's *De resurrectione* was written, as it seems, at about the same time as Pamphilus's apology (Pamphilus may allude to Methodius when he speaks of people who wrote against Origen's doctrine of the resurrection<sup>133</sup>). The common background of both works seems to be the controversy over Origen's thought, and in particular Origen's idea of the resurrection, which is generally regarded by scholars as the target of Methodius's criticism here,<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Chapter 3 is analysed by R. Franchi, “Ispirazione biblica (Gn 1, 26) e linguaggio pagano-filosofico in un passo del *De autexusio* di Metodio d'Olimpo,” *Vetere Christianorum* 44 (2007) 239–256, who highlights in it the presence of the two main components of Origen's works: Scripture and philosophical argument.

<sup>132</sup> T.D. Barnes, “Methodius, Maximus, and Valentinus,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1979) 47–55.

<sup>133</sup> *Apol.* 127: *eos qui etiam scripta de hoc [sc. de resurrectione] edere aduersum eum non pepercerunt.*

<sup>134</sup> Jerome, VI 83: *Methodius, Olympi Lyciae, et postea Tyri episcopus [...] adversus Porphyrium confect libris [...] de resurrectione opus egregium contra Origenem et adversus eundem de Pythonissa.* On Methodius's *De resurrectione* see L.G. Patterson, “Who Are the Opponents in Methodius' *De resurrectione*?” in *Studia Patistica* XIX, 221–229; M. Mees, “2 Co 6,1–10 und die Auferstehung der Toten nach Origenes und Methodius,” *Lateranum* 51 (1985) 153–163; C. Riggi, “La forma del corpo risorto secondo Metodio in Epifanio (*Haer.* 64),” in *Morte e immortalità nella catechesi dei Padri del III–IV secolo*, ed. S. Felici (Rome, 1985) 75–92; M. Mees, “Paulus, Origenes und Methodius über die Auferstehung der Toten,” *Augustinianum* 60 (1986) 103–113; J.F. Dechow, “Origen and Corporeality: the Case of Methodius' *On the resurrection*,” in *Origeniana V*, 509–518; E. Prinzivalli, “Aspetti esegetico-dottrinali”; M. Mejsner, *L'escatologia di Metodio di Olimpo* (Rome, 2012).

but not on his doctrine of apokatastasis. Indeed Methodius, who possessed a philosophical culture, was deeply inspired by Origen in many respects, including his allegorical exegesis.<sup>135</sup> He misunderstood some points of Origen's thought, such as his notion of the risen body and perhaps that of creation, also because of his slightly different anthropology.<sup>136</sup> For instance, he believed that Origen taught that "the body was given to the soul as fetters after the transgression, while beforehand the soul was bodiless" (Ὁριγένης δεσμὸν τὸ σῶμα ἔλεγε δεδóσθαι τῇ ψυχῇ μετὰ τὴν παράβασιν, πρὶν δὲ ἀσώματον αὐτὴν βιοτεύειν, *De res. ap.* Phot. *Bibl. Cod.* 234, p. 293a), which is not the case.<sup>137</sup> But he drew a great deal on Origen's thought, including the doctrine of apokatastasis. His simplifications of Origen's concept of resurrection were known to Didymus (*Comm. in Ps.* Toura pap. 329,1–330,24) and to Gregory of Nyssa, both Origenian thinkers.

Much of what Methodius maintains in *De resurrectione* is perfectly consistent with Origen's true thought. He even embraces Origen's etymologies, such as that of αἰδής from αἰδής, which he expressly ascribed to Origen and accepts (*ap.* Phot. *Bibl. Cod.* 234, p. 299a), and agrees with Origen when he states that God alone is ἀσώματος proper, while souls are a kind of σώματα νοερά (ibid. p. 301b). Methodius insists that God did not create evil and is not responsible for evil (ch. 1), which was supported first by Plato and then by Clement and Origen, who often repeated this anti-Gnostic notion. Methodius interprets the "skin tunics" given to Adam and Eve after the fall, not as the body tout court, but as the mortal condition and the mortal body. This is what Origen himself thought, who identified them with the heavy, mortal body that humans received after the fall, and not with the body tout court. Methodius also claims that the resurrection will not be without bodies (ch. 2); Origen had never maintained himself that bodies will not be resurrected. For him, too, resurrection will certainly be with bodies, transformed and made immortal and spiritual; he was clear that only the holy Trinity can be without a body. Methodius appears to have misunderstood and simplified Origen's notion of resurrection, as I shall show, but not to have refuted or even attacked it. Indeed, Origen is never mentioned in the dialogue *De resurrectione*, and Methodius does not indicate in any

<sup>135</sup> See esp. E. Prinzivalli, *L'esegesi biblica di Metodio di Olimpo* (Rome, 1985); M. Marin, "Origene e Metodio su Lev 24,2–4," *Vetera Christianorum* 18 (1981) 470–475; E. DePalma Digeser, "Methodius and Porphyry," in *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010) 21–26.

<sup>136</sup> On it see K. Bracht, *Vollkommenheit und Vollendung: zur Anthropologie des Methodius von Olympus* (Tübingen, 1999).

<sup>137</sup> See my "Preexistence of Souls?"

way that the ideas rejected in the dialogue are those of Origen. According to Benjamins, the object of Methodius's attack in *De resurrectione* was not Origen, but Neoplatonism, and especially Porphyry.<sup>138</sup> And Mazzucco thinks that Methodius's treatment of resurrection was directed more against the Origenists of his day than against Origen himself.<sup>139</sup> Even Patterson, who thinks that the *De resurrectione* contains criticism of Origen, nevertheless admits that this criticism derives from a misunderstanding of Origen and was intended to attack contemporary adversaries more than Origen himself.<sup>140</sup>

In fact, Aglaophon, the character of *De resurrectione* who supports the thesis that the body will not raise again, does not represent Origen's thought.<sup>141</sup> Methodius rather illustrated Origen's position, also by means of a long quotation, not through Aglaophon,<sup>142</sup> but through Proclus, who supported the resurrection, not of the body's material substratum or ὑποκείμενον, which is in constant transformation, but of the body's εἶδος. Both Proclus and Aglaophon are refuted by Eubulius and Memmianus, who supported the view of the resurrection of the flesh. Origen himself sometimes spoke of the resurrection of the flesh, and that he never denied the resurrection of the body was well known to Methodius, who, in 3,22, quoted a section from Origen's lost *De resurrectione*, which begins with "This body awaits its resurrection." This is the very same passage as reported in Pamphilus's apology, a work that was probably read by Methodius.

<sup>138</sup> H.S. Benjamins, "Methodius von Olympos, *Über die Auferstehung*," in *Origeniana VII*, 91–98.

<sup>139</sup> C. Mazzucco, "Il millenarismo di Metodio di Olimpo di fronte a Origene," *Augustinianum* 26 (1986) 73–87. Another element that might be considered to divide Methodius and Origen is the latter's millenarianism, which emerges especially in the ninth speech in his *Symposium*. But, as is observed by E. Prinzivalli, "Il millenarismo in Oriente da Metodio ad Apollinare," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 15 (1998) 125–151, Methodius's millenarianism is moderated and takes into account Origen's criticisms. Methodius's so-called millenarianism, indeed, is completely spiritualised precisely due to Origen's influence. See L. Patterson, "Methodius' Millenarianism," in *Studia Patristica XXIV* (Leuven, 1993), 306–315. According to Id., *Methodius*, 106 it is impossible to call Methodius a millenarian: "the common notion that Methodius is an adherent of a millenarian tradition is quite misleading." See also Daley, *Hope*, 61–63. On Methodius's interpretation of Revelation see C. Mazzucco, "Tra l'ombra e la realtà," *Cultura Classica e Cristiana* 6 (1985) 399–423.

<sup>140</sup> Patterson, *Methodius*, 184–186.

<sup>141</sup> According to Prinzivalli, *Magister*, 96–97 Origen's and Aglaophon's objections to the resurrection of the material flesh can be worked out from the comparison between Celsus's objections in Origen's *Contra Celsum*, the *De resurrectione* ascribed to Justin (ed. A. D'Anna [Brescia, 2001]) and Athenagoras' *De resurrectione*.

<sup>142</sup> This seems to be supposed by A. Vitores, *Identidad entre el cuerpo muerto y resuscitado en Orígenes según el De Resurrectione de Metodio de Olimpo* (Jerusalem, 1981).

According to Henri Crouzel, Methodius misunderstood Origen.<sup>143</sup> I do think so; in particular, one of the main points of this misunderstanding revolves around the meaning of εἶδος in Origen. The latter thought that what will be the same in the present and in the risen body is the body's εἶδος, and with εἶδος he meant the form as the metaphysical principle, in an Aristotelian sense, and more specifically in a sense that was typical of Alexander of Aphrodisias, who was very probably known to Origen.<sup>144</sup> Methodius, instead, seems to have understood Origen's εἶδος as a mere shape/appearance (μορφή, σχῆμα), a very different idea. This is obvious in the excerpts from *De resurrectione* preserved by Photius *Bibl. Cod.* 234, p. 299a–300a, where Methodius reads εἶδος as a synonym of μορφή or σχῆμα, e.g.: σχῆμα τὸ ἀνιστάμενον; πλείσται γὰρ τῶν σχημάτων αἱ παραλλαγαί; ὁ μετασχηματισμὸς ἢ εἰς τὸ ἀπαθεῖς καὶ ἔνδοξόν ἐστιν ἀποκατάστασις. Methodius's misunderstanding is clear in his mistaken paraphrase of Origen's thought:

Origen wants that what is restored [ἀποκαθίστασθαι] to the soul is not the same flesh, but a *certain shape* [ποιὴν μορφήν] of each one, according to the appearance [κατὰ τὸ εἶδος] that now, too, characterises the flesh [...] that each one may *look* the same [ὁ αὐτὸς φανῇ] again in his or her *shape* [κατὰ τὴν μορφήν] [...] The material body is in flux [ῥευστοῦ] and never remains the same, but it increases and decreases around the form [εἶδος] which characterises the *shape* [μορφήν] and by which the *figure* [σχῆμα] is also controlled; therefore, the resurrection (according to Origen) will necessarily be *of the form/appearance* [εἶδος] alone [...] Dear Origen, you affirm with confidence that we should expect a resurrection *of the sole appearance* [τοῦ εἶδους μόνον], which will be transposed into a pneumatic body [...] It is absolutely absurd to limit the resurrection to the *sole appearance* [ἐπὶ μόνου τοῦ εἶδους], since souls, even after exiting the flesh, never seem to abandon the *appearance* [εἶδος] which Origen says to be resurrected. [...] Origen says that the *appearance* [εἶδος] is dissociated from the body and given to the soul. [...] It is inconsistent to claim that the *appearance* [εἶδος] raises again without undergoing any damage, while the body, in which this appearance was stamped [τὸ εἶδος ἐντετυπωμένον], is destroyed [...] In Origen's view, perhaps the figure [σχῆμα] of the soul at death has an *appearance* that is similar [ὁμοιοειδές] to the dense and earthly body. (Ibid.)

Methodius thinks of the appearance, and not of the metaphysical form (as is further confirmed by his conviction that the souls of Moses and Elijah

<sup>143</sup> H. Crouzel, "Les critiques adressées par Méthode et ses contemporains à la doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité," *Gregorianum* 53 (1972) 679–715 and "La doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité," *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 81 (1980) 175–200; 241–266.

<sup>144</sup> A full argument for this is in I. Ramelli, "Alexander of Aphrodisias: A Source of Origen's Philosophy?" *Philosophie Antique* 13 (2013) 1–48.

retained this “appearance” which enabled them to be seen at the Transfiguration, and by the very definition of εἶδος that Methodius offers<sup>145</sup>). This was a misunderstanding and simplification of Origen’s doctrine, more than a diametrical opposition to it. Indeed, Methodius’s greatness lies on the ascetic and mystical plane,<sup>146</sup> much more than the philosophical. In his own *De resurrectione*, instead, Origen used εἶδος and λόγος to indicate someone’s body’s immutable metaphysical form or principle, which remains unaltered at the resurrection. In the excerpt from Book 2 of Origen’s *De resurrectione* preserved by Pamphilus (*Apol.* 130), this λόγος is translated by Rufinus as *ratio*, *ratio substantialis*, *ratio substantiae*,<sup>147</sup> and in an excerpt from Origen’s Commentary on Psalms preserved by Pamphilus (*Apol.* 141) and dealing again with the preservation of the body’s metaphysical form at the resurrection, the aforementioned εἶδος is rendered *species*.<sup>148</sup>

Methodius’s conception of death is one of the many points of contact between Methodius and Origen—and, in this case, also Gregory of Nyssa, who surely read Methodius.<sup>149</sup> Physical death is considered by the latter, both in *De resurrectione* and in *Symposium*, to be providential. In *De resurrectione* Methodius claims that the death of the body was wanted by God “so that, by means of the dissolution of the body, *sin might be destroyed completely, up to its very roots*” (ch. 4). The total elimination of sin is the very basis of apokatastasis. Indeed, this is confirmed in the Greek preserved by Photius: διὰ τοῦτο

<sup>145</sup> “The appearance is what shows the identity of the limbs in the character of the shape of each one” (εἶδος φησιν εἶναι τὸ τὴν ταυτότητα τῶν μελῶν ἐν τῷ χαρακτῆρι τῆς μορφῆς ἐκάστου ἐμφαίνον, *ap.* Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 234, p. 300b).

<sup>146</sup> M.B. Zorzi, “Metodio d’Olimpo, un autore minore?” *Revue d’Études Augustiniennes* 52 (2006) 31–56. See also Patterson, *Methodius*, 36, who deems Methodius “an independent Christian teacher.”

<sup>147</sup> *Ea ratio quae continet Pauli substantiam—Pauli autem nunc dico corporalis—salua permanet [...] per illam ipsam substantialem rationem quae salua permanet de terrae puluere resuscitantur a mortuis ex omnibus locis hi quibus ratio illa substantiae corporalis in ipsis corporibus permanebat quae in terram prolapsa Dei uoluntate iterum suscitatur.*

<sup>148</sup> *Sicut enim eadem in nobis species permanet ab infantia usque ad senectutem, licet characteres multam uideantur immutationem recipere, ita intellegendum est hanc speciem quae nunc est in nobis ipsam permansuram etiam in futuro, plurima tamen immutatione in melius et gloriosius facta. Necesse est enim animam in locis corporeis habitantem uti corporibus talibus quae apta sint his locis in quibus degit [...] Cum caelorum habitaculum promittatur secundum locorum gloriam consequens est aptandas esse etiam corporum qualitates. Nec ideo tamen prior haec species exterminabitur, licet gloriosior eius effecta sit permutatio.* This passage is also handed down in Greek by Epiphanius (*Pan.* 64,14,6–9), who, however, seems to have drawn it from Methodius’s *De resurrectione* rather than from Origen.

<sup>149</sup> Documentation on this point is found in my “Methodius,” in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, eds. G. Maspero–L.F. Mateo-Seco, *Vigiliae Christianae* Suppl. 99 (Leiden, 2010), 494–496.

θάνατος ἐδόθη παρὰ Θεοῦ τῷ ἐξημαρτηκότι, ἵνα μὴ ἀθάνατον μείνῃ τὸ κακόν (*Bibl. Cod. 234*). This is the aim of the “skin tunics,” i.e., mortality, given after the fall: τοὺς δερματίνους χιτῶνας διὰ τοῦτο κατεσκεύασεν, οἷον εἰ νεκρότητι περιβαλὼν αὐτόν, ὅπως διὰ τῆς λύσεως τοῦ σώματος πᾶν τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ γεννηθὲν κακὸν ἀποθάνῃ (*ibid.*). A third formulation, preserved again by Photius, comes very close to that of the *Symposium*: Διὸ καὶ τὸν θάνατον ὁ Θεὸς πρὸς ἀναίρεσιν τῆς ἀμαρτίας ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀνέυρατο, ἵνα μὴ ἐν ἀθανάτοις ἡμῖν ἀνατείλασα ἀθάνατος ᾗ (*Bibl. Cod. 234*, p. 296a). In ch. 5 Methotius takes over Origen's reflection on God's way of acting as described by Scripture:<sup>150</sup> in the Bible God is said first to kill and then to give life; he kills only in order to give back a better life. This is how Methodius puts it: “God, as Scripture says, *kills and then gives life*, that flesh, after the withering and *death of sin*, may, like a temple that is rebuilt, be erected again with the same elements, impassible and immortal, while *sin is entirely and definitely destroyed* [...] *the very idea of evil will disappear*.” This notion of physical death as providential and as a premise to apokatastasis is the same as was already found in Origen and will appear again in Gregory Nyssen, who knew Methodius as well as Origen. In these thinkers it is possible to observe the same close relationship between resurrection and restoration.

Again, the use of the “theology of the image” in the service of the doctrine of apokatastasis is the same in Origen, in Methodius here (ch. 6), and in Gregory of Nyssa. This is how Methodius expresses this train of thought: “The noble image,” mutilated and stained by evil,

will be restored again, intact and perfect, in the same original form [...] because God, in his love for the human being, has not tolerated to leave it in such a condition, that it *might not be culpable forever*, and might not bear the blame indefinitely, but had it resolve again into its original elements, so that, when God models it again, all defects in it *might vanish and disappear*.

Again, the notion of *anastasis* as *apokatastasis* emerges, which was then shaped by Nyssen in *De anima* and elsewhere. The exclusion of an eternal culpability is another element that paves the way for the eventual apokatastasis. Thus, “in the remodelling, *all defects and flaws will disappear*, and [the human being] will be made again *perfect and dear to God*” (ch. 7). Just as death is conceived of as a purification aimed at a better life, so is the end of the world conceived by Methodius as a purification for a restored world: “The whole world will be submerged by a flood of fire from heaven, and will

<sup>150</sup> See my “Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah,” 59–78.



be burnt for *purification and renovation* [...] creation will be *restored* to a better state and *will remain, rejoicing and exulting, for the children of the Lord at the resurrection*, for whom it now suffers and is in pain, waiting for the liberation from the corruption of the body" (ch. 8). Methodius observes that in the world restored in this way "there must necessarily be inhabitants who will no longer be liable to death; they will not marry, nor will they have children, but they will live in full happiness, like angels, with no transformation or decay. Therefore, it is stupid to discuss in which modality of life our bodies will exist, if there will be no more air, nor water, nor anything else" (ch. 9). These ideas, too, will be taken over by Nyssen in *De anima*, and they were in agreement with Origen's, especially in noticing that human bodies will exist in a new manner, when the material world will no more exist. No more air, water, and so on, means no material elements.

In chs. 10–12 Methodius, quoting Jesus's words just as Origen and Nyssen do, repeats that "those who have received the resurrection will be like angels," not because their human nature will be transformed into an angelic nature proper, but because their human nature will be restored into the condition that obtained before the fall. This is indeed a reference to apokatastasis. In ch. 13 Methodius quotes the Pauline passages that Origen also quoted and that Gregory will cite in *De anima*: "This corruptible body will have to assume incorruptibility; this mortal body will have to assume immortality [...] Just as in Adam all die, so are all vivified in Christ." It is crucial to consider that this vivification of all in Christ for these authors did not simply mean the resurrection of the bodies, but the liberation from the death of sin. In ch. 14, Methodius adduces the same argument for resurrection as Gregory Nyssen brings forth in *De anima*.<sup>151</sup> And his interpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles as a symbol of the resurrection and restoration is very similar to that which Gregory proposes toward the end of his *De anima*: "It means this real tabernacle of ours, which, after *falling into sin* because of the transgression of the law, and after being *broken by sin*, will be assembled again according to his promise, and will be resurrected into incorruptibility, that we may really celebrate, in God's honour, the great and glorious feast of Tabernacles."<sup>152</sup> Besides, Ezechiel's vision of the vivification of dry bones is cited here by Methodius, just as Gregory Nyssen will cite it in rela-

<sup>151</sup> If from an invisible drop a human being can be formed, it will be even easier for a body to rise on the basis of the earthly body, which has already existed.

<sup>152</sup> Patterson, *Methodius*, 111 is right to observe that in his interpretation of this feast Methodius's attention is oriented "toward the final stages of that perfection as they lead to communion with the divine nature rather than on the millenarian interpretation of the feast."

tion to the feast of Tabernacles. This is Methodius's statement: "Thus the Lord will be able to renovate the flesh, and put it together again, no longer by means of the bonds that held it together earlier, but of such bonds that will make it forever incorruptible and indissoluble." This refers not only to the resurrection of the body, but also to the restoration of the whole human nature. Indeed, in the subsequent section, which has survived in a compendious form, Methodius describes the resurrection as a restoration, in a way which is in line with Origen and of which Nyssen will be reminiscent: "the restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] into a condition that is free from passions and glorious." Freedom from passions will clearly entail freedom from sin. The body "will be no longer liable to passions, not because its limbs will be different, but because it does not desire carnal pleasures any more" (ch. 12). A similar notion of the providential nature of physical death as a way to the resurrection-restoration is found in Methodius's fragments on Jonah: "All will rise again [...] God joined the soul, the divine image, to the earthly body [...] Christ became incarnated in a body so that, having formed it in conformity to a more divine image, he might have it rise uncorrupted."

Like his *De autexusio*, and even his *De resurrectione* in many respects, Methodius's *Symposium* was wholly written in the spirit of Origen—even though not of the ancient sympotic tradition<sup>153</sup>—, probably before 290 CE. There is no attack on Origen in it. Methodius does not include Origen among the heretics criticised in *Symp.* 8,10, and even the criticism found in *Symp.* 3,2 against those who interpret Scripture only allegorically cannot be directed against Origen, who almost always kept also the literal, historical meaning.<sup>154</sup> Methodius himself in this work advocates the allegorical interpretation of Scripture in 5,2 and 5,7, and in many other passages he interprets the OT and NT allegorically. In *Symp.* 5,2 Thallusa begins her allegorical exposition of Abraham's sacrifice with the declaration that she wants to expound "the true meaning of Scripture." In 5,7 Methodius remarks that "the Law, according to the Apostle, is spiritual, and includes the prefiguration of the goods to come. Therefore, let us break the veil of the letter that covers it and let us consider its true meaning." Indeed, the treatment of Scripture in the *Symposium* is indebted to Origen more than anyone else, as Patterson rightly observed;

<sup>153</sup> The incapacity of Methodius to construct a true sympotic dialogue is underlined by A. Bril, "Plato and the Sympotic Form in the *Symposium* of St Methodius of Olympus," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 9 (2005) 279–302, who thinks that the *Symposium* of Methodius was unsuccessful from the point of view of the literary genre.

<sup>154</sup> See my "Origen and the Stoic Allegorical Tradition."

I myself have demonstrated this in specific cases.<sup>155</sup> Patterson notes that an “uninhibited, perhaps unwary, celebration of the spiritual sense of the Scriptures predominates.”<sup>156</sup>

Given the Origenian line of Methodius’s *Symposium*, it comes as no surprise that here too, Methodius shows a penchant for apokatastasis. Indeed, Methodius follows Origen regarding the fall and restoration of souls. In 2,7, Theophila grounds this hope in Scripture: God, “according to the Apostle, wants *all humans to be saved* and to attain the knowledge of Truth.” Speech 9 is crucial in this respect. It is devoted to the allegorisation of the already mentioned Feast of Tabernacles as resurrection and restoration, an allegorisation that Methodius developed in *De resurrectione* as well and is also present in Gregory of Nyssa, as I have mentioned. This feast “prefigures the *resurrection* and *restoration* of our tabernacle, which had fallen onto the earth [...] and which we shall have back immortal: we shall celebrate the true Feast of Tabernacles in a new and incorruptible creation” (*Symp.* 9,1). That this restoration is not simply the restoration of the body, but of the whole human being, with the definitive liberation from sin and spiritual death, is demonstrated by Methodius’s fundamental remark in *Symp.* 9,2. Here, we find again the notion, which I have already pointed out in Methodius and which appears again in Origen, that after the Fall God introduced physical death for all, in order to spare eternal, spiritual death to all:

Our tabernacles will be stably built when the body rises, with bones that are again joined and united to the flesh: then we shall really celebrate a feast for the Lord, when we receive eternal tabernacles, not doomed to perish and dissolve in the ashes of the grave. Now, our tabernacle at the beginning was well solid, but it was shaken by transgression and bent toward the earth, *because God put a limit to sin* by means of death, in order to *avoid* that the human being, immortal, *living in sin and with sin alive in it, should be liable to an eternal condemnation*. Therefore, he died; the soul was separated from flesh, so that *sin might die* thanks to (physical) death, given that it cannot survive in a dead person. Therefore, once *sin is dead and destroyed*, I shall rise *immortal*, and I praise God because, through (temporary physical) death, he *has liberated his children from (spiritual eternal) death*.

That the outcome of such a conception is universal restoration could not be clearer. Physical death is a way to limit the duration of evil, and with evil it also limits the duration of spiritual death, which coincides with otherworldly purification, that it may not be eternal and may be eventually

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<sup>155</sup> Patterson, *Methodius*, 128; further demonstration in my “L’Inno a Cristo-Logos.”

<sup>156</sup> Patterson, *Methodius*, 129.

followed by apokatastasis. Methodius is close to Origen's idea that the otherworldly fire, conceived of as purifying, will burn sins and pleasures off: "chastity, by *consuming pleasures*, threatens that, unless all will obey her without hesitation, and will not come to her, *she will destroy everything with fire*. For after her there will be no more law or doctrine than judgment and fire" (*Symp.* 10,4). The universal extension of salvation is declared in *Symp.* 10,2-3: "God's mercy entirely dissolves death, assists humanity, and nourishes the light of the heart [...] Whereas the first laws, promulgated in the day of Adam, Noah, and Moses, did not succeed in giving salvation to humanity, *the law of the Gospel*, it alone, *has saved all*," πάντας. Methodius uses a past tense because Christ has already begun to accomplish the salvation of all. This is also why Domnina in *Symp.* 10,1 proclaims that "*the rule of the evil one*, who once enslaved the whole of the human race, *was destroyed* [...]" when Christ became incarnated." And in *Symp.* 3,6 Thalia proclaims:

The Logos assumed human nature to defeat the serpent and to *destroy the condemnation* that arose with the fall of humanity. It is right that the evil one should be defeated by no one else but the one whom he had deceived [...] because the *destruction of sin and of that condemnation* would have been impossible unless the same human being to whom it was said, "dust you are and dust you will be again," had been *created anew* and *the condemnation had been eliminated* which, because of that human being, had extended to all. For, "As in Adam all die, so *will all be vivified in Christ*," who assumed the nature and stance of Adam.

This can happen because Christ-Logos, the new Adam, he too a firstborn and born from a virgin, like the earth at the beginning, is incorruptible and untouched by sin; this is why he can correct the corruption and the sin of the first human being (*Symp.* 3,4-5). This does not entail only the removal of physical death, which will be corrected by the eventual resurrection, but also the removal of sin.

The perfect accomplishment, to be sure, will be in the end, when all have become believers (*Symp.* 8,8-9), but the coming and work of Christ have instantly begun to be effective. Origen also assumed that all will become believers before apokatastasis: the latter will be able to take place only when all have come to believe. This could not take place in any other way. The restoration of the image of God in the human nature, which will be described by Gregory Nyssen, too, as apokatastasis at the end of *De anima* is accomplished by Christ and in Christ. Methodius describes it in 1,3: Christ "assumed upon himself our form, disfigured as it was by many sins, that we, for whose salvation he assumed it, *might receive again the divine form*." Virginity itself, which is exalted in the whole of the dialogue, prefigures

immortality and apokatastasis, in that, in its complex and full conception that Methodius shares with Origen,<sup>157</sup> it implies liberation from sin (cf. *Symp.* 10,6). Apokatastasis is celebrated in the final choral hymn, in strophes 21–22:

Corruption has disappeared, and likewise the pains of illnesses that make people shed tears; *death has been eliminated* [θάνατος ἡρέθη]; *all stupidity has perished* [ἔλωλε πάσα ἀφροσύνη]; there is no more affliction of the soul which devours, because God's joy [χαρά] has returned to shining over mortals. Paradise is no longer destitute of mortals. By order of God, it is inhabited again, *as it was in the beginning*, by that human being who had fallen from it because of the subtle arts of the serpent, and who is now again *incorruptible, fearless, and blessed* [ἀφθαρτος, ἄφοβος, μάκαρ].<sup>158</sup>

Again, this does not refer to the resurrection only, but to the final restoration of humanity into its original condition, free from sin and evil. This is precisely apokatastasis. It is to be noticed that Methodius puts the blame of the fall on the serpent's deception; this is the same as Gregory of Nyssa will do: evil was chosen by the protoplasts because it looked good; a deception originated it, a false judgment, and this was instilled by the devil. In their ethical intellectualism, both Methodius and Gregory think that evil is not chosen as evil, but because it is mistaken for a good.<sup>159</sup> In the end, the totality of the nations, Paul's πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν, will enter the Church, and therefore will be included in the number of the saved (8,6).

Also, Origen's opposition to astral determinism (*ap.* Eusebius *PE* 6,11,69–70)<sup>160</sup> is the same as is found again in Methodius, *Symp.* 8.<sup>161</sup> Indeed, in 8,13–17, just as in his *De autexusio*, Methodius supports human free will against

<sup>157</sup> Virginity is not simply the preservation of the body pure from intercourse, but it ends up with including all virtues, qua preservation of the soul pure from sin. See my "L'Inno"; M.B. Zorzi, "La reinterpretazione dell'eros platonico nel *Simposio* di Metodio," *Adamantius* 9 (2003) 102–127; Eadem, "The Use of the Terms ἀγνεία, παρθενία, σωφροσύνη and ἐγκράτεια in the *Symposium* of Methodius," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 138–168; a somewhat more restricted vision of virginity in Methodius seems to emerge in C. Tibiletti, "Ascetismo filosofico e ascetismo cristiano," *Orpheus* 6 (1985) 422–431; Id., "Metodio. Verginità e platonismo," *ibid.* 8 (1987) 127–137.

<sup>158</sup> For the meaning of μάκαρ and its reference to the human being in this strophe see my "L'Inno a Cristo Logos."

<sup>159</sup> See my "La colpa antecedente come ermeneutica del male in sede storico-religiosa e nei testi biblici," in *Atti del XIV Convegno di Studi vetero-testamentari dell'Associazione Biblica Italiana: Origine e fenomenologia del male: le vie della catarsi vetero-testamentaria, Roma-Ciampino, Il Carmelo, 5–7.IX.2005*, ed. I. Cardellini, *Ricerche Storico-Bibliche* 19 (2007) 11–64.

<sup>160</sup> On which see my *Bardaisan of Edessa*, 42; 45–46.

<sup>161</sup> For an analysis of this passage see C. Macías–M. González, "El Banquete de Metodio de Olimpo y sus argumentos contra la astrología," *Mene* 5 (2005) 307–341.

astral and fatal determinism, exactly like Origen and Bardaisan. Methodius employs the same arguments as Bardaisan in the *Liber legum regionum*: the laws instituted by human beings contradict Fate; in 8,16, Methodius asks the very same question as Bardaisan is asked in the *Liber*: why God did not make the human being incapable of sinning from the beginning. The answer is the same: because God created it free. It was precisely to defend human free will against Gnostic predestinationism, at the same time safeguarding theodicy, that Origen had constructed his history of salvation from the ἀρχή to the τέλος, the latter characterised as apokatastasis.<sup>162</sup> As I have mentioned in Ch. 1, Bardaisan at the end of the *Liber* illustrates the new order of things that will obtain in the τέλος, which for him, too, is characterised as apokatastasis. Likewise, Methodius in *Symp.* 8,11 speaks, much in an Origenian way, of ἡ ἀποκατάστασις τῶν καινῶν αἰώνων.

The notion of a spiritual church seems to be a further aspect of Origen's heritage in Methodius.<sup>163</sup> Another significant aspect is that Methodius, too, just like Clement and perhaps Origen, considered the *Apocalypse of Peter* to be inspired. Now, this text, as I have pointed out previously, can be regarded as a "precursor" of the apokatastasis theory, in that it foresees the eventual liberation of the damned from the "river of fire." Indeed, Methodius was basically an Origenian. This is also confirmed by his linguistic use in respect to the terminology of eternity: he characterises punishment in the next world only as αἰώνιος, never as αἰδιος.<sup>164</sup> This is in perfect agreement with his adhesion to the doctrine of apokatastasis.

### *Peter of Alexandria*

#### *Head of the Didaskaleion in Continuity with Origen*

Peter, bishop of Alexandria during the years 300 ca.–311, martyr, and author of two surviving homilies, both extant in Coptic versions, was a contemporary of Methodius and—at least according to Philip of Side—led the Didaskaleion for a while.<sup>165</sup> The attack on Origen in the Acts of his

<sup>162</sup> Argument in my *La coerenza*.

<sup>163</sup> See J.M. Torrents, "Origenismo y gnosis. Los 'perfectos' de Metodio," *Augustinianum* 26 (1986) 89–101, based on *Symp.* 3 and 8.

<sup>164</sup> See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 226–227.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. T. Vivian, *St. Peter of Alexandria. Bishop and Martyr* (Philadelphia, PA 1988); F. Fatti, "L'anno della morte di Pietro II di Alessandria," *Adamantius* 15 (2009) 341–345. Alexander of Alexandria wrote a panegyric for Peter, preserved in Coptic fragments. See E. Lucchesi, "Pierre l'Apôtre ou Pierre d'Alexandrie?" *Analecta Bollandiana* 117 (1999) 285–288. A Coptic history

martyrdom, deprived of any historical value, is later and cannot be taken as an expression either of Origen's or of Peter's own thought.<sup>166</sup> Peter's fragments, which appear to be much more reliable, include no criticism of Origen.

Among these fragments, three are preserved by Leontius of Byzantium; one concerns the two natures of Christ, and two others come from the first book of a treatise against the theory of the preexistence of bare souls that sinned before their union with a body. This view, which is criticised by Gregory of Nyssa as well in *De anima*, is often considered to have been supported by Origen, but this is incorrect.<sup>167</sup> Neither Peter nor Gregory were attacking Origen on this point. In the case of Gregory, I have demonstrated this in an Oxford workshop;<sup>168</sup> as for Peter, my argument is further supported by Peter's use of ὡς φασίν in his own *De anima* in reference to those who supported the preexistence of bare souls. Similarly, seven Syriac fragments from a lost work on the resurrection endorse the thesis of the identity between the risen and the earthly body. This too has been seen as a criticism of Origen, but in fact it cannot be regarded as such, since Origen did maintain the identity (an identity of εἶδος) between the risen and the earthly body.<sup>169</sup> Likewise, Peter's Greek fragments, presented as coming from a Festal letter of 309, support exactly the same concept of the resurrection as Origen did: the risen body will keep the same substance as the earthly body, but with its qualities changed. Likewise, three fragments on the Trinity quoted by Cyril at the Council of Ephesus have been considered to be directed against Origen's purported subordinationism (of the Son to the Father). But not even this is the case, since Origen was an anti-subordinationist, as I have argued extensively.<sup>170</sup> The time of Peter was also the time of Pamphilus's apology for Origen, which, reporting the adversaries' views, reflects misunderstandings

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of the Church of Alexandria begins with Peter; for an edition, translation, and commentary up to Alexander see T. Orlandi, *Storia della Chiesa di Alessandria, I: Da Pietro ad Atanasio* (Milan, 1968). For Peter's works see CPG 1635–1662.

<sup>166</sup> See W. Telfer, "St Peter of Alexandria and Arius," *Analecta Bollandiana* 6 (1949) 117–130.

<sup>167</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Preexistence of Souls?"

<sup>168</sup> "Preexistence of Souls?"

<sup>169</sup> Another fragment, quoted by Justinian in his Letter to Men(n)as (on which see below, Ch. 4), is probably spurious. According to J. Barnes–H. Chadwick, "A Letter Ascribed to Peter of Alexandria," *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 (1973) 443–455, a letter to Apollonius of Lycopolis attributed to Peter in ms. Paris, Bibl. nat. Copte 1311, fol. I, is not likely to be authentic; however, it draws on reliable sources. 14 canons by Peter, perhaps deriving from a Paschal letter, and ratified by the Trullan council, deal with the *lapsi* question.

<sup>170</sup> In "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism."

such as those I have just mentioned. But Peter does not seem to have shared them. He is also likely to have embraced the doctrine of apokatastasis, even though we have no direct evidence of this.

### *Gregory Thaumaturgus*

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, or the Wonderworker (about 213–270), was one of the first and main defenders of Origen. He was a direct disciple of Origen, and very probably authored a thanksgiving discourse to his master, which is also valuable in order to know what Origen taught, and how.<sup>171</sup> While this was sometimes questioned,<sup>172</sup> Gregory's paternity of this work is very probable thanks to the attestations of Pamphilus—who in his *Apology* mentioned Gregory as a disciple of Origen and quoted the whole of Gregory's thanksgiving oration in his own apology for Origen (Socrates *HE* 4,27,6<sup>173</sup>)—, Eusebius (*HE* 6,30), and Gregory of Nyssa. Indeed, the identity of Gregory Thaumaturgus rests upon other reliable sources, such as Basil, who much praises him (calling him “the great, apostle, and prophet [...] who followed in the saints' footsteps [...] familiar with God [...] lamp of the Church,” in *De Spir. S.* 29,74), Gregory of Nyssa, who wrote his biography/panegyric on the basis of the tradition available in his family (CPG 3184), including in it a profession of faith whose original was still preserved in the church of Neocaesarea in his day,

<sup>171</sup> See my “Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 217–263; also A. Le Boulluec, “D'Origène à Eusèbe: bibliothèque et enseignement à Césarée de Palestine,” in *L'enseignement supérieur dans les mondes antiques et médiévaux*, ed. H. Hugonnard-Roche (Paris, 2008), 239–261, who underlines the difference between Origen's inclusion of Greek philosophy in his own teaching and the school of Pamphilus and Eusebius, which was more concentrated on Scripture; M. Rizzi, “Il *didaskalos* nella tradizione alessandrina, da Clemente alla *Oratio Panegyrica in Origenem*,” in *Magister*, edd. G. Firpo–G. Zecchini (Milan, 1999), 177–198; Gregorio il Taumaturgo (?), *Encomio di Origene*, ed. Id. (Milan, 2002); J.W. Trigg, “God's Marvelous *Oikonomia*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001) 27–52; L. Lugaresi, “Studenti cristiani e scuola pagana,” *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 25 (2004) 779–832; M. Rizzi, “Un'ipotesi sulla provenienza dell'Encomio di Origene attribuito a Gregorio il Taumaturgo,” *Adamantius* 11 (2005) 124–132.

<sup>172</sup> Cfr. P. Nautin, *Origène: sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris, 1977), 83–85, 99–133; H. Crouzel, “Faut-il voir trois personnages en Grégoire le Thaumaturge?” *Gregorianum* 60 (1979) 287 ff.; Idem, “La cristologia in Gregorio il Taumaturgo,” *Gregorianum* 61 (1980) 745 ff.; M. Simonetti, “Una nuova ipotesi su Gregorio il Taumaturgo,” *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 24 (1988) 17–41; Rizzi, *Encomio*, and the collection of essays *Il Giusto che fiorisce come palma*, ed. B. Clausi–V. Milazzo (Rome, 2007), with both contributions that question Gregory's identity and others that do not do so.

<sup>173</sup> “Pamphilus the Martyr also mentions him [sc. Gregory] in the books on Origen which he wrote with much effort. In these books Gregory's farewell oration to Origen is also reported.”



and Jerome in VI 65. Recently Michael Slusser, Winrich Löhr and others also claimed that Gregory, the disciple of Origen, was indeed the author of the thanksgiving address.<sup>174</sup> This is an important point, in that it provides a link between Origen and the Cappadocians, via Macrina the Elder († 340 ca.). She was the grandmother of Basil and Gregory Nyssen and a disciple of Gregory Thaumaturgus's, who brought Christianity to Neocaesarea (Basil *Ep.* 204,6). It is to her that Basil traces back the Christian faith of their family (*Ep.* 204,6; 210,1; 223,3). Gregory of Nyssa's venerated sister, Macrina the Younger, was named after her.

From his panegyric oration for Origen, the profound spiritual bond between Origen and Gregory Thaumaturgus emerges, as well as Gregory's veneration for his teacher. Gregory calls Origen "divine man" and "dear soul,"<sup>175</sup> above all for the love for philosophy with which Origen was able to inspire him and his brother. Gregory insists on the soul's free will, a principle that is central to Origen's philosophy of history, anthropology, and eschatology, and praises Origen's conception of logic—the first step of the curriculum taught by Origen—, far from the idea of a science of mere words. He also extols Origen's teaching of physics, geometry, astronomy, and ethics. Regarding the latter, Gregory exalts Origen in that he did not limit himself to speaking of virtues, but he offered an example of them with his own life, especially the cardinal virtues and the principle, "Know Yourself." He also praises Origen's method in theology and metaphysics to have his disciples study all philosophical schools apart from the atheistic ones, in order to acquire a critical habit without becoming dependent on a particular school. Gregory also recalls Origen's exceptional power to persuade in argument, and of course his Scriptural exegesis.

At Origen's school Gregory certainly learnt the doctrine of apokatastasis as well. In ch. 17 of his work Gregory describes Christ as "the one who saves all human beings, even those who are half dead and deprived of all; he is

<sup>174</sup> M. Slusser, "St. Gregory Thaumaturgus," *The Expository Times* 120,12 (2009) 573–588; Id., *St. Gregory Thaumaturgus* (Washington, 1998); W. Löhr, "Christianity as Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives of an Ancient Intellectual Project," *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (2010) 160–188, *praes.* 161 and 165, following C. Scholten, "Psychagogischer Unterricht bei Origenes," in *Hairesis* (Münster, 2002), 261–280. On 161 n. 3 Löhr expressly writes: "I see no need to follow P. Nautin [...] and question the attribution of the *Address* to Gregory the Wonderworker." B. Stefaniw, "Exegetical Curricula in Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius," in *Studia Patristica* 47 (2010) 281–294, *praes.* 283, also takes Gregory as the author of the thanksgiving oration for Origen and as evidence of Origen's teaching method.

<sup>175</sup> For this description in ch. 6 see W.H.C. Frend, "The Failure of the Persecutions in the Roman Empire," *Past and Present* 16 (Nov. 1959), 10–30, *praes.* 12; I. Ramelli, "Vir Dei," in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, ed. A. Di Berardino, III (Genoa, 2008), 5632–5636.

the Protector and *Healer of all*, the Logos, the tireless Saviour *of all*." Given that the kind of Christianity transmitted to Cappadocia was Origen's and Gregory Thaumaturgus's Christianity, it comes as no surprise that Gregory of Nyssa, Macrina the Younger, and probably also Gregory Nazianzen and Macrina the Elder, were supporters of the theory of apokatastasis. It was very probably Gregory Thaumaturgus himself who transmitted this doctrine to Cappadocian Christianity. And indeed Rufinus toward the end of Book 1 of his polemical work against Jerome,<sup>176</sup> attests that Gregory taught apokatastasis without hesitation.

What Gregory Thaumaturgus says in his *Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes* about God's judgment in the future aeon and the reward for good or evil deeds and the αἰώνιος ("otherworldly") abode for the just is not at all at odds with the doctrine of apokatastasis. Neither is his mention of an "eternal evil" (ἄτδιον κακόν) in reference to death in *Comm. in Eccl.* 1016,14. For this expression does not indicate the eternity of hell, but it is rather used by Gregory to report the view of those who do not believe in an afterlife, "as though death were horrible, as though it were an eternal evil which leads to nothing." Gregory himself exactly denies that death may ever be an eternal—and really eternal: ἄτδιον, not αἰώνιον—evil. In the extant Greek, however, Gregory shows to prefer the Biblical αἰώνιον.<sup>177</sup> In *Comm. in Eccl.* 996,32 "the present enjoyment" is contrasted with the "incorruptible things pertaining to the time to come [αἰώνια]," which God has established in a fixed form. I have already cited the αἰώνιος abode which awaits people when they are purified (ibid. 1016,49). The expression "αἰώνιος life" indicates a "communion between God the Father and human beings" (*Adnunt.* 10,1156,44); or, again, it is "knowledge of the true God and of him whom he has sent" (*Comm. in Eccl.* 1161,15; see also 1164,2). In *Fr. in Job.* 590,37, αἰώνιος means "remote," as in the LXX, where it often renders the Hebrew 'ôlām. Origen made this correspondence clear in his *Hexapla*, which Gregory Thaumaturgus probably saw and studied in Caesarea. Gregory, in line with Origen and his followers, never applies the adjective ἄτδιος to future punishment; he even attributes it to his adversaries, in order to deny that death may be an eternal evil. His teacher, Origen, had indeed argued in *Comm. in Rom.* 5,7 that, *si uita aeterna est, mors esse non possit aeterna*.

<sup>176</sup> See below, Ch. 3, section on Jerome and Rufinus.

<sup>177</sup> On Gregory's use of terms indicating eternity see Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 129–130.



### CHAPTER THREE

#### ORIGEN'S APOLOGISTS AND FOLLOWERS, THE CAPPADOCIANS, EVAGRIUS, THE ANTIOCHENES, AND FOURTH-CENTURY LATIN ORIGENIANS

Μηδὲν ἔξω τῶν σωζομένων.

No being will remain outside the number  
of the saved.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Illud: Tunc et  
Ipse Filius* 21 Downing)

#### *Pamphilus*

St. Pamphilus Martyr, an admirer of Origen,<sup>1</sup> is one of the most important sources on Origen and on the outset of the Origenistic controversy.<sup>2</sup> He belonged to a noble family from Berytus (now Beirut), and was educated there; he sold his goods in favour of the poor and went to Alexandria, as is attested by Photius (*Bibl. Cod.* 118), who knew Pamphilus's *Apology*. There, he was a disciple of Pierius, so faithful an Origenian as to be called "Origen the Younger" or "the New Origen,"<sup>3</sup> who became the head of the catechetical school. Then Pamphilus—with an Alexandria-Caesarea itinerary that

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<sup>1</sup> On Pamphilus's reception of Origen see, for instance, E. Prinzivalli, "Per un'indagine sull'esegesi del pensiero origeniano nel IV secolo," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 11 (1994) 433–460; A. Solignac, "Pamphile de Césarée," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 12 (1984) 150–154; E. Junod, "Controverses autour de l'héritage origénien aux deux extrémités du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Origeniana VII*, 215–223, *praes.* 220–223, according to whom Pamphilus included Methodius among the accusers of Origen who were hypocrites and ignorant, because he seems to criticise authors who have composed books against Origen's resurrection doctrine (PG 17,547–593); A. Grafton–M. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book* (Cambridge, MA 2006), 179–193. Cf. E. Junod, "L'apologie pour Origène de Pamphile et la naissance de l'origénisme," in *Studia Patristica XXVI* (Leuven, 1993), 267–286.

<sup>2</sup> On the Origenistic controversy see at least E.A. Clark, *The Origenistic Controversy* (Princeton, 1992); Prinzivalli, *Magister*; Eadem, "The Controversy about Origen before Epiphanius," in *Origeniana VII*, 195–213.

<sup>3</sup> On him, who was of course a supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis, see above, Ch. 2, section on Pierius.

resembled that of Origen—settled in Caesarea, where he founded a school of theological studies (Eus. *HE* 7,32,25), which had not only a philological, but also a philosophical connotation.<sup>4</sup> Both connotations are set within the tradition of Origen. Like Origen, Pamphilus is depicted by Eusebius (*Mart.* 37) as well steeped not only in Scripture, but also in Greek *paideia* and theology.

Again like Origen, he was attentive to the text of the Bible, and copied many manuscripts of Scripture, as is also attested by several colophons. He restored and enlarged Origen's library in Caesarea, and with the help of Eusebius—his disciple and the future bishop of Caesarea<sup>5</sup>—took care of Origen's works. Jerome, in *VI* 75, attests that Pamphilus “transcribed most of Origen's works by his own hand,” and that those manuscripts were still kept in the Caesarea library in Jerome's own day, at the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth. In the Caesarea library Jerome could still see and consult<sup>6</sup> a copy of the *Hexapla* written by Origen (*Comm. in Ps.* 5 and 21 Morin; *Comm. in Tit.*). Jerome owned “twenty-five volumes of commentaries of Origen's” copied by Pamphilus himself. In his lost biography of Pamphilus, to which he refers in *HE* 7,32,25—where he also describes Pamphilus as a philosopher, like Origen—Eusebius had included a catalogue of his library (*HE* 6,32); moreover, the section on Pamphilus in Eusebius's *Martyrs of Palestine* is extant. Such was Eusebius's veneration for Pamphilus that he wanted to be called “Eusebius of Pamphilus,” thus presenting himself as Pamphilus's spiritual son. Jerome, who knew Eusebius's book on Pamphilus, in *C. Ruf.* 1,9 cites from it, attesting that Pamphilus helped indigent students by providing them with books and with what is necessary to live; like Origen, Pamphilus also accepted women among his disciples. His library was still in existence in the sixth century.

He died a martyr during the last persecution, just before Constantine, being beheaded in 309/10 CE. During his imprisonment, and still after tortures, in 307/10, with Eusebius's help, he went on copying manuscripts and

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<sup>4</sup> E. Penland, “Eusebius Philosophus? School Activity at Caesarea Through the Lens of the Martyrs,” in *Reconsidering Eusebius. Collected papers on literary, historical, and theological issues*, eds. S. Inowlocki–C. Zamagni (Leiden, 2011), 87–97, has some reasons to stress this latter point.

<sup>5</sup> On Eusebius as an Origenian and a supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis see below in this chapter, section on Eusebius.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Grafton–Williams, *Christianity*. On the library of Caesarea and Pamphilus's role in its enlargement see A. Le Boulluec, “D'Origène à Eusèbe. Bibliothèque et enseignement à Césarée de Palestine,” in *L'enseignement supérieur*, 239–261.

wrote his apology for Origen in five books;<sup>7</sup> after his death, Eusebius added a sixth, conclusive book.<sup>8</sup> Only Rufinus's Latin version of Book 1 is extant, which may have circulated in an independent way.<sup>9</sup> Books 2–5 were devoted especially to a defence of Origen's life, and represented an important source for Eusebius's own biography of Origen in Book 6 of his *Ecclesiastical History* (he refers to them in *HE* 6,23.33.36). Rather than Origen's homilies, it was his philosophical treatises and great commentaries that—predictably enough—needed Pamphilus's defence, and first of all his masterpiece, Περὶ Ἀρχῶν. These were the most liable to misunderstandings.

In the first book, Pamphilus attests that around the end of the third century there was a growing hostility to Origen. His accusers are charged by Pamphilus either with incompetence (*imperitia*), in that they criticised Origen without even having read his works, but merely on the basis of other people's assertions,<sup>10</sup> or with *pravitas mentis*. The latter are those who select some passages from Origen's works in bad conscience, in order to condemn them, or people who were educated on Origen's works and then criticised him, even by writing works against him, “who for many years was a teacher of the church and grew old in the universal church” (*qui per tot annos magister*

<sup>7</sup> Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 118, 92b, presents the first five books as composed by Pamphilus in prison with the assistance of Eusebius and the sixth as completed by Eusebius after Pamphilus's death. The extent of Eusebius's involvement in this apology is discussed. See É. Junod, “L'auteur de l'Apologie pour Origène traduite par Rufin: les témoignages contradictoires de Rufin et de Jérôme à propos de Pamphile et d'Eusèbe,” in *Recherches et tradition: mélanges patristiques offerts à Henri Crouzel*, dir. A. Duplex (Paris, 1992), 165–179. Editions: Pamphile et Eusèbe de Césarée, *Apologie pour Origène*, suivi de Rufin d'Aquilée, *Sur la falsification des livres d'Origène*, eds. R. Amacker–É. Junod, Sources Chrétiennes 464–465 (Paris, 2002); Pamphilus von Caesarea, *Apologia pro Origene, Apologie für Origenes*, übers. und eingel. von G. Röwekamp (Turnhout, 2005), this too with Rufinus's *De adulteratione librorum Origenis*. M. Simonetti, “L'attività letteraria di Rufino negli anni della controversia origeniana,” in *Storia ed esegesi in Rufino di Concordia* (Udine, 1992), 89–107, reads Rufinus's translation of Pamphilus's apology, and his own appendix *De adulteratione*, as a part of Rufinus's program of translation of Origen's works and of his own controversy with Jerome. On this see here below, the last section of the present chapter.

<sup>8</sup> Origen is the first Christian author for whom ancient scholars composed apologies (Pamphilus and the anonymous cited by Photius *Bibl. cod.* 117; according to P. Nautin, *Origène. Sa vie et son oeuvre* [Paris, 1977], 100–153 the latter's Apology represents Books 4 and 5 of Pamphilus's Apology), an anthology, the *Philocalia*, and a commentary, that of Didymus the Blind on Origen's *De Principiis*. See Prinzivalli, “Per un'indagine,” 433.

<sup>9</sup> See E. Junod, “L'auteur de l'Apologie,” 177–179; Idem, “Controverses,” 215. The conviction that Rufinus produced a faithful translation is shared by Prinzivalli, *Magister*, 178; less by R. Williams, “*Damnosa Haereditas*,” in *Logos. Festschrift L. Abramowski* (Berlin, 1993), 151–169.

<sup>10</sup> See I. Ramelli, “Decadence Denounced in the Controversy over Origen: Giving Up Direct Reading of Sources and Counteractions,” forthcoming in the Proceedings of the Conference, *Décadence*, Berlin, Freie Universität, 7–8 October 2011.

*ecclesiae fuit, qui in ecclesia catholica senuit*). This depiction will be quickly taken over by Didymus the Blind and thence by Jerome, who cites Didymus in the preface to Origen's Homilies on Ezekiel: *Magnum est quidem, amice, quod postulas, ut Origenem faciam latinum et hominem, iuxta Didymi videntis sententiam*, alterum post Apostolum ecclesiarum magistrum *etiam Romanis auribus donem*.

Interestingly, Pamphilus attests the *ad hominem* nature of the accusations levelled against Origen: if at the beginning of a manuscript the name of the author was absent, then its contents were praised, because the readers or hearers did not know that these were Origen's, but the very same things were blamed as "heretical" if Origen's name was present as the name of the author:

Accidere solet uel casu, uel interdum studio, ut nomine in codice non praetitulato legatur aliquid ipsius in auribus obtrectatorum *quasi alterius tractatoris*; quod tam diu placet et laudatur, atque in omni admiratione habetur, quam diu nomen non fuerit indicatum; at *ubi Origenis cognita fuerint esse quae placebant, statim displicent, statim haeretica esse dicuntur!*

Pamphilus praises Origen for his humility, authority, and priestly service, as well as for his labour, asceticism, and philosophical life.<sup>11</sup> Against accusations of heresy that were already circulating at his time,<sup>12</sup> he demonstrates the orthodoxy of Origen's Trinitarian doctrine (*Ap.* 5) by means of the direct quotation of passages from his writings,<sup>13</sup> especially from his philosophical masterpiece, which was the most heavily misunderstood:

Ex his praecipue [libris] testimonia congregabimus quae accusatores eius quam maxime criminantur, id est quae per spatium et quietem in secreto conscripsit—haec enim adserunt maxime a praedicatione ecclesiastica discrepare—ex his praecipue libris quos *περὶ ἀρχῶν* adtitulauit, in quibus *quam plurima a calumniatoribus incusantur*. (Apol. 20)

<sup>11</sup> *Apol.* 9: *Honore presbyterii in ecclesia praeditus fuerit et uitam abstinentissimam egerit et ualde philosopham [...] laboris ac studii eius certissima designantur indicia, praecipue uero per eos tractatus quos paene cotidie in ecclesia habebat ex tempore.*

<sup>12</sup> *Apol.* 9: *obtrectandi uitio facile condemnare et alienum ab ecclesiastica doctrina temere pronuntiare*; 15: *Alienum esse Origenem continuo protestantur, nihil sibi cum illius doctrina commune esse confirmant. Anathema quoque dicere eum non dubitant improbe, et inferre maledicta non parcunt, ne illum quidem apostolicum sermonem uerentes quo designat quia 'maledici regnum Dei non possidebunt' (1 Cor 6:10). Origen himself had quoted 1 Cor 6:10 in his Letter to friends in Alexandria (ap. Rufin. *Adult.* 7) against those who spoke evil of him on no grounds.*

<sup>13</sup> *Apol.* 19: *non nostris uerbis aut adsertionibus defensionem paremus, sed ex suis propriis uocibus, quibus ipsa aliena haec esse quae isti obiciunt proprio sermone testatur [...] ubi autem eius ipsius qui accusatur uocibus utimur et ad omnes obiectiones accusatorum suis uerbis eum, non nostra adsertione defendimus, quae ultra relinqui potest criminationis occasio, saltem his ipsis qui non ueri studio, sed uelut libidine quadam culpandi semper agitantur?*

Pamphilus refutes nine accusations by quoting nine excerpts from Origen. From these, i.e. from Origen's own words, it emerges that the Alexandrian identified the rule of faith with the ecclesiastical tradition: *illa sola credenda est ueritas quae in nullo ab ecclesiastica traditione discordat* (Apol. 23). One of the most important passages quoted by Pamphilus is Origen's comment on Hebr 1:3, which is crucial to his Trinitarian doctrine.<sup>14</sup> The first six accusations are shown by Pamphilus to reciprocally contradict themselves. One of these is that of being a precursor of Arianism (*eum secundum Arteman uel Paulum Samosateum purum hominem, id est non etiam Deum, dicere Christum Filium Dei*: Apol. 83), another is that of teaching docetism (*dicunt eum dicere δοκῆσαι, id est putatiue tantum, et per allegoriam, non etiam secundum ea quae per historiam referuntur, gesta esse omnia quae a Salvatore gesta sunt*: ibid.), yet another is that of professing two Christs.<sup>15</sup> A further charge is related to that of docetism and concerns the sheer allegorisation of Scripture without admitting of the historical plane: *quod historias corporales quae per omnem sanctam Scripturam referuntur de gestis sanctorum penitus denegat* (ibid.).

The eschatological accusations are the most relevant to the present investigation. The seventh, in particular, bears on the resurrection and apokatastasis. Origen was accused of not admitting of any future punishment for sinners, which is obviously not the case and is an utter misinterpretation of Origen's theory of apokatastasis, as well as of denying the resurrection of the dead:

Et de resurrectione mortuorum et de impiorum poenis non leui impugnant eum calumnia, uelut negantem peccatoribus inferenda esse supplicia [...] maximam [criminationem] ponunt quod resurrectionem futuram denegat mortuorum. (Ibid.)

To counter such accusations, and make it clear that Origen did not deny either the resurrection of the body or that of the very flesh, Pamphilus quoted four passages from Origen's lost *De resurrectione*, two from his Commentary on Isaiah, and two from his comments on Psalm 1:5. In Apol. 151–157

<sup>14</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism and its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line," *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011) 21–49. On the role of Hebr 1:3 for the formation of Origen's notion and terminology of hypostasis see Eadem, "Origen ... and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis."

<sup>15</sup> *Adserunt eum duos Christos praedicare* (ibid.). The accusation is repeated at 115 (*accusatur quasi duos Christos dicens, unum Deum Uerbum et alium Iesum Christum qui ex Maria natus est*), where Pamphilus also proceeds to refute it.



Pamphilus also quotes *Princ.* 2,10,4–6 and *Comm. in Ps.* 6<sup>16</sup> to prove that Origen taught that sinners will actually undergo punishments in the next world. In this way he disproved a charge that Methodius too seems to have levelled against Origen (*De res.* 3,21,9). The last charge, easily contradicted by Pamphilus, is that of supporting metempsychosis: *Ultima uero in eum est criminatio illa [...]* μετενσωματώσεως (*Apol.* 87; cf. 173: *nouissima criminatio est μετενσωματώσεως, id est transmutationis animarum*).

The eighth charge revolves around protology and is closely related to eschatology. It concerns the so-called preexistence of souls:<sup>17</sup> *ei de anima obiciunt [...]* quod ante corpus eam factam dicat exsistere.<sup>18</sup> This time, Pamphilus (*Apol.* 8) does not quote passages from Origen, but he remarks that Origen never wrote a *De anima*<sup>19</sup> exactly because this matter is uncertain and the apostles declared nothing on the origin of the soul. In fact, Origen did not support the preexistence of mere souls, deprived of bodies, but of intellectual beings, equipped with a subtle, spiritual body from the beginning. Pamphilus's teacher, Pierius, supported the preexistence of intellectual creatures, like Origen and Pamphilus. The latter claimed that only in this way is it possible to account for the different situations of humans and their miseries without holding God responsible for them. The problem was clearly theodicy. Indeed, Pamphilus, just like Rufinus after him,<sup>20</sup> saw very well that Origen's concern was theodicy and the necessity of countering "Gnostic" determinism. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that the polemic against "Gnostic" determinism was precisely the basis of his whole vision of human history, from protology to eschatology.<sup>21</sup> Pamphilus, like Rufinus after him, lucidly realised Origen's anti-Gnosticism.

Especially in his preface, Pamphilus, like Athanasius just very few decades after him,<sup>22</sup> insisted on the heuristic nature of Origen's argument:

<sup>16</sup> It is preserved only by Pamphilus, *Apol.* 157: *Si ergo in hac praesenti uita tam intolerabiles sunt poenarum dolores, quid putandum est tunc cum non iam crassiore anima utetur indumento, sed cum id spiritale effectum ex resurrectione recipiet et uehementius utique quo subtilius est sentiet uim doloris?*

<sup>17</sup> See Ramelli, "Preexistence of Souls?"

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Apol.* 87: *Quidam uero disputationes eius uel opiniones quas de animae statu uel dispensatione disseruit culpant.*

<sup>19</sup> *In tam multis et tam diuersis eius libris nusquam omnino inuenitur ab eo liber proprie De anima conscriptus sicut habet uel De martyrio uel De oratione uel De resurrectione.*

<sup>20</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 217–263.

<sup>21</sup> See my "La coerenza," 661–688.

<sup>22</sup> See above, Ch. 2, the section on Athanasius.

Quae cum exponit frequenter addere solet et profiteri se non haec quasi definitiua pronuntiare sententia, nec statuto dogmate terminare, sed *inquirere pro uiribus*, et sensum discutere Scripturarum [...] cum omni humilitate et ueritate non erubescit fateri haec *sibi non liquere*.

Another important point that Pamphilus makes is his exhortation to read Origen's whole works without relying on other people's statements or excerpts.

*Paulinus and Apologies for Origen That Depend on Pamphilus's*

Paulinus, bishop of Tyre, and then of Antioch, was a slightly more recent contemporary of Pamphilus. His formation seems to have taken place in Antioch, where he was a presbyter before becoming bishop of Tyre. According to Jerome, he became the patriarch of Antioch after the death of St. Philogonius in 324. He died shortly after and his successor Eustathius attended the Nicene council. Paulinus was a convinced Origenian, and was accused by Marcellus of Ancyra of deeming Origen more important than Scripture, and of retaining, among Origen's doctrines, only those which were most useful to him. These are likely to have included the doctrine of apokatastasis as well. He was deeply admired by Eusebius, who dedicated to him Book 10 of his *Ecclesiastical History* and his *Onomasticon*.

An anonymous author seems to have based himself on Pamphilus's work—in addition to the works of Dionysius, Clement, Demetrius, and Eusebius, whom he cited—in order to write his own apology for Origen in five books summarised by Photius (*Bibl. Cod.* 117, 91b–92a Bekker), who describes this work as a βιβλίον ὑπὲρ Ὀριγένους ... ἀνεπίγραφον. In this work, the author defended Origen's doctrines, including the so-called preexistence of souls, by showing their scriptural and Patristic grounds. He also defended Origen, correctly, against the charge of being a precursor of Arianism. Like Pamphilus, Athanasius, and Rufinus, the anonymous apologist remarked upon Origen's "zetetic" method (γυμνασίας αὐτῷ χάριν εἰρήσθαι) and, like Origen himself and Rufinus—a disciple of Didymus's—, lamented the interpolations that altered Origen's works: ἢ ὑπὸ τινων ἑτεροδόξων τοῖς αὐτοῦ συγγράμμασι παρεμβεβλήσθαι.

The anonymous apologist reported the same eschatological accusations levelled against Origen as Pamphilus had done, such as those of supporting the doctrine of metempsychosis (even in the form that contemplated the migration of rational souls into irrational animals!) and denying the resurrection of the flesh and otherworldly correction (οὐκ ἔστιν αἰώνιον κόλασιν

οὐδὲ σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν). Indeed, three accusations out of fifteen therein are eschatological. The apologist's strategy was also the same as Pamphilus's: he directly quoted Origen's relevant passages.

It seems that this apology comes from a monastic Egyptian environment, perhaps from the circle of Didymus the Blind.<sup>23</sup> It is not to be ruled out, however, that Photius was summarising Pamphilus's very apology, now almost entirely lost, or a compendious version of it. According to Photius, indeed, the apologist insisted on the orthodoxy of Origen and his ecclesiastical status (ἐκκλησιαστικὸν καὶ τῶν ὀρθοδόξων ἀποφαίνεται τὸν ἄνδρα), on which Pamphilus also insisted. However, a dozen of the accusations refuted by the anonymous apologist correspond to those found in Theophilus of Alexandria toward 400 CE, to which I shall return in due course. And a couple of others even resemble charges that were circulating in the day of Justinian. All this suggests that this apology was later than the time of Pamphilus and probably even of Didymus, or else that it was heavily reworked in the day of Theophilus or even later.

Around 440 CE, Socrates too refers to Pamphilus's apology twice, quoting two fragments from books that are now lost. It is unsure, however, whether he used its original version or, as Van Nuffelen suggested, one that was reworked around 400 CE and interpolated by an Origenist in order to adapt it to his day's controversy. Indeed, Photius indicates that several versions of this apology circulated.<sup>24</sup> The same Photius states that, besides Pamphilus's and Eusebius's Apology for Origen in six books, "at that time there were very many other most respected persons who composed apologies for him," καὶ ἄλλοι δὲ πλείστοι κατ'ἐκείνου καιροῦ καὶ ἀξιολογώτατοι ἀπολογίας ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ συνετάξαντο (*Bibl. Cod.* 118, 92b Bekker). It is a pity that Photius does not, or can not, indicate their names.

### *Didymus of Alexandria*

Didymus the Blind<sup>25</sup> (310/13 ca.–395/8) was a faithful follower and defender of Origen, *Origenis apertissimus propugnator*, as Jerome puts it in *Apol. c. Ruf.* 1,6. According to Jerome (*praef. in Orig. Hom. in Ez.*), Didymus defined Ori-

<sup>23</sup> So J. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity* (Macon, 1988), 255–264.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Van Nuffelen, "Two Fragments," 103–114.

<sup>25</sup> See F. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon* (London, 1983), 83–91; R. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and his Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria* (Urbana, Ill. 2004); A. Louth, "The Fourth-Century Alexandrians: Athanasius and Didymus," in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. F. Young–L. Ayres–A. Louth (Cambridge, 2008), 275–282.

gen “the second teacher of the churches after the Apostle(s).” Rufinus, however, in the preface to his own translation of Origen’s Περὶ Ἀρχῶν, maintains that it was Jerome himself who defined Origen *alterum post apostolos ecclesiae doctorem*. Jerome, indeed, in his preface to the treatise on the Hebrew names, describes Origen as *post apostolos ecclesiarum magister*. Such definitions echo that of Pamphilus, who, as I mentioned, declared that Origen *magister ecclesiae fuit* and *in ecclesia catholica senuit*. Jerome translated Didymus’s *De Spiritu Sancto* into Latin—in order to show the lack of originality of Ambrose’s *De Spiritu Sancto*<sup>26</sup>—and was the dedicatee of Didymus’s commentary on Hosea; moreover, it was at Jerome’s request that Didymus wrote his commentary on Zechariah: *conscripsit [...] de Spiritu Sancto librum unum, quem ego in Latinum verti [...] in Osee, ad me scribens, commentariorum libros tres, et in Zachariam, meo rogatu, libros quinque [...] et infinita alia* (VI 109).

Didymus, however, lacked Origen’s outstanding genius. He was, first and foremost, an exegete, and, like Origen, very learned, in the liberal arts and in Scripture, and very productive; even Libanius—not only Jerome in VI 109<sup>27</sup>—praised him for his learning. Unlike Origen, Didymus was not really a philosopher, but in his works Platonism and Stoicism, and even Aristotelianism, emerge.<sup>28</sup> He had been blind since his infancy and, according to Rufinus, had people read books aloud to him. Like Origen, he was an ascetic, but, unlike him, it seems that he was not ordained.

Palladius visited Didymus four times in the period between 398 and 408 CE. Didymus knew Anthony, who looked favourably at Origen and praised Didymus as a person endowed with the spiritual sight (Socr. *HE* IV 25). Three among Didymus’s disciples were outstanding Origenians: Gregory Nazianzen, who in turn was the “spiritual father” of Evagrius; Jerome, who frequented Didymus for a month and called him Seer (but then he rejected him, when he also, famously, repudiated Origen), and Rufinus, who

<sup>26</sup> In his preface to his own translation of Didymus’s *De Spiritu Sancto*, Jerome reproached Ambrose with plagiarising Didymus’s Greek *De Spiritu Sancto*, while—according to Rufinus—Jerome himself often plagiarised Origen (Rufin. *Apol. c. Hier.* 22–24).

<sup>27</sup> *Tantum miraculum sui omnibus praebuit, ut dialecticam quoque, et geometriam, quae vel maxime visu indiget, usque ad perfectum didicerit.*

<sup>28</sup> Prinzivalli, *Le metamorfosi*, 916, 936–937 and *passim*, highlights the similarities between Didymus and Origen, but also notes that Didymus uses more philosophical and grammatical technical terminology and was influenced by Aristotelianism (though I think that the influence of Aristotelianism was remarkable on Origen as well, passing through channels such as Ammonius and Alexander of Aphrodisias; see my “Alexander of Aphrodisias”); M. Ghattas, *Die Epinoia-Lehre bei Origenes und Didymos dem Blinden*, in *Origeniana VII*, 525–530; R.A. Layton, *Judas Yields a Place for the Devil*, *ibid.* 531–543; Id., *Didymus the Blind*; Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy*, 339.

stayed with Didymus for six years, and later on defended Origen's thought and works. It is meaningful that Athanasius, the anti-Arian who admired Origen surely also because of Origen's anti-subordinationism,<sup>29</sup> appointed Didymus the head of the catechetical school, the Alexandrian Didaskaleion, in a time in which it fell under the bishop's control. Didymus, who opposed Arianism himself, directed the school for half a century.

Like Origen, Didymus wrote many exegetical works—some of which I have already cited for their connections with Jerome—, as well as some doctrinal works, such as his *Adversus Manichaeos*, which is extant in an almost complete form in Greek, and his *De Spiritu Sancto*, which is close to Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*.<sup>30</sup> An anonymous (because acephalous) *De Trinitate*, long ascribed to him, is probably not by him, and has recently been ascribed to various other authors, such as Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite, by István Perczel, or Cassian the Sabaite (a sixth-century ascetic to be distinguished from John Cassian) by Panayiotis Tzamalikos.<sup>31</sup> Here, however, I am not concerned with this issue.

In general, in his exegetical works, Didymus follows Origen, and not only for the choice of allegoresis. Didymus, like Origen, adduces parallel passages from all of Scripture, in support of a given interpretation, and repeatedly polemicalises against Gnostics, Arians, and Manichaeans. Again like Origen, he often compares the Septuagint with the versions of Symmachus and Theodotion (for instance in *Comm. in Prov.* 1624). Moreover, as I shall exemplify, Didymus followed Origen's interpretations of single passages, albeit generally simplifying his thought.

Didymus is usually considered to have been “condemned by the church” along with Origen, but in Justinian's documents and, what is even more crucial, in the acts of the Council of 553 CE<sup>32</sup> he is not even mentioned. However, he was anathematised in the edict of Eutychus of Constantinople along with Evagrius, and his association with Origenism, also in the III Council of Constantinople in 680 CE—albeit based on ungrounded charges such as that of teaching the doctrine of metempsychosis: the same ungrounded charge that was levelled against Origen—caused the loss of most of his works. Some of them were recovered in 1941 thanks to the discovery of the

<sup>29</sup> See I. Ramelli, “The Trinitarian Theology of Gregory of Nyssa,” 445–478.

<sup>30</sup> An introduction and translation is provided by H.J. Sieben, *Didymus der Blinde: De Spiritu Sancto = Über den Heiligen Geist*, lateinisch-deutsch (Turnhout, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> For these hypotheses see below, Ch. 4, the sections devoted to Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite and Cassian.

<sup>32</sup> On which see below, Ch. 4, section on Justinian.

Toura papyri, which also contain material from Origen. Didymus's works are commentaries on the books of Genesis, Psalms,<sup>33</sup> Job, Ecclesiastes, and Zechariah.<sup>34</sup> His commentary on the so-called Catholic Epistles is extant in a Latin translation, but its authenticity is questioned. Origen's influence on Didymus in these exegetical works is remarkable, both for the allegorical exegesis and for the concepts employed. Especially in his commentary on Genesis, albeit never mentioning Origen by name, Didymus closely follows Origen's analogous commentary, which is regrettably lost but can be partially reconstructed thanks to Origen's own homilies on Genesis, to some other passages in other works of Origen's, and to Didymus's own commentary. The latter, however, seems to have simplified and stiffed Origen's treatment.<sup>35</sup> Another major source of this commentary is Philo.<sup>36</sup>

Didymus espoused Origen's concept of the ἀρχή and the τέλος. As for the former, he supported the so-called "preexistence of souls," although for Origen, as I have mentioned, it is inappropriate to speak of a preexistence of bare souls. Like Origen, Didymus identified the skin tunics in Gen 3:21 with the present corruptible and heavy body (*PsT* 220,3; *PTA* 8,336), which makes me think that he, exactly like Origen, did not conceive of a preexistence of bare souls proper, but of rational creatures endowed with bodies that were not corruptible. After the fall, these became corruptible and mortal.

As for the τέλος, Didymus maintained the eventual apokatastasis, as is attested by Jerome in *De scr. eccl.* 109. In *Fr. in Ps.* 69,23, Didymus insists

<sup>33</sup> See E. Prinzivalli, "Codici interpretativi del Commento ai Salmi di Didimo," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 3 (1986) 43–56; Ead., *Didimo il Cieco e l'interpretazione dei Salmi* (LAquila, 1988). On Didymus's interpretation of Psalms see also G.M. Vian, "La tradizione esegetica alessandrina sui Salmi: alla ricerca dell'Origene perduto," in *Paideia cristiana. Studi M. Naldini* (Rome, 1994), 219–226; R.A. Layton, "Didymus and Evagrius on Ps. 118: Bible Study in Fourth-Century Origenism," *Adamantius* 7 (2001) 44–53; G. Nigro, "Origenismo e polemiche trinitarie: Didimo e Basilio su Ps 32," *Vetera Christianorum* 44 (2007) 111–138, who shows how Didymus and Basil independently elaborated on Origen's exegesis; A.K. Geljon, "Didymus the Blind: Commentary on Psalm 24 (23 LXX): Introduction, Translation, and Commentary," *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011) 50–73.

<sup>34</sup> R.C. Hill, *Commentary On Zechariah* (Washington, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> See Ch. Köckert, "Origen and Didymus the Blind, Commentators on Genesis: A Comparison," in *Origeniana X*, 407–418, who notes how Didymus shortens and simplifies Origen's commentary (to the extent we can know it; see now K. Metzler, *Origenes: Die griechischen und lateinischen Fragmente der Genesiskommentierung* [Berlin, 2009]), skipping its philological and philosophical discussions and reducing the richness of alternative exegeses given by Origen.

<sup>36</sup> Didymus mentions Philo by name in some passages of his Commentary on Genesis; more often, Didymus uses Philo's material without naming him. For an example see A.C. Geljon, "Philonic Elements in Didymus the Blind's Exegesis of the Story of Cain and Abel," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 282–312.

on Christ's eschatological reign, which will be eternal.<sup>37</sup> But before the end, the very *telos*, Christ cannot reign universally, because he cannot reign where sin reigns.<sup>38</sup> Once, finally, sin will no longer be found in anyone, then the Lord will reign eternally: ἐπειδὴ δὲ ζητηθεῖσα ἡ ἁμαρτία ἢ βασιλεύουσα τοῦ ἐνεργούντος αὐτὴν οὐχ ἠνέρεθη, Κύριος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα βασιλεύει καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος. What underlies this passage is Origen's argument on the disappearance of evil: if God will eventually be "all in all," as 1 Cor 15:28 states, then evilness will no longer exist in any creature, because God cannot be found in evil.<sup>39</sup> Didymus, likewise, argues that, if Christ must reign on all forever, sin will no longer be in anyone, since Christ cannot reign over sin.

Like Origen and then Gregory Nyssen (Origen in fact with more doubts, Gregory with more certainty), Didymus also included the fallen angels and Satan in the eventual restoration. For Didymus, indeed, just as for Origen, the κόλασις αἰώνιος of which the Bible speaks is not an "eternal" punishment, but a cathartic and therapeutic punishment that will take place "in the world to come."<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Didymus, exactly like Origen, in his *Commentary on Job* (76,11 ff.) shows a clear awareness of the multiple meanings of the crucial term αἰώνιος. Didymus observes that, if this adjective refers to God, it means "absolutely eternal," without beginning or end, and not subject to time, whereas when it refers to human beings it indicates the other world, that is, the continuation of this life in the life to come:

It must be noted that αἰώνιος has several meanings: in the expression, "αἰώνιος God," it means "beginningless and endless"; for the divinity is called αἰώνιος by virtue of having neither a beginning nor an end of its existence. But αἰώνιος is something different when used in the expression, "things unseen are αἰώνια": for these things are not αἰώνια in the way God is, but rather because they do not perish but remain forever in the same condition. And αἰώνιος is meant differently again when it is measured against present time, as when it is said:

<sup>37</sup> On Didymus's Christology see M. Ghattas, *Die Christologie Didymos' des Blinden von Alexandria in den Schriften von Tura: zur Entwicklung der alexandrinischen Theologie des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Münster, 2002).

<sup>38</sup> Οὐ γὰρ οἶόν τε τὸν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ δύο κυρίους καὶ βασιλεῖς εἶναι. ὅτε ἐκυρίευσεν καὶ ἐβασίλευεν ἡ ἁμαρτία τοῦ αὐτὴν ποιούντος, ὁ θεὸς οὐ κύριος οὐ βασιλεὺς τοῦ ἁμαρτάνοντος ἦν. On Didymus's notion of sin, which is close to Origen's in what can be considered a concept of original sin, see B.J. Bennett, "The Soiling of Sinful Flesh: Primordial Sin, Inherited Corruption and Moral Responsibility in Didymus the Blind and Origen," *Adamantius* 11 (2005) 77–92.

<sup>39</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism. Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Biblical and Philosophical Basis of the Doctrine of Apokatastasis," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 313–356.

<sup>40</sup> Cfr. Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 135–142.

"the sons of this αἰών are wiser in their generation"; for the time that extends over the life of a human being is also called an αἰών. Indeed, it is laid down concerning the Hebrew who did not wish to be freed in the seventh year, that "he will be your slave unto the αἰών": for no slave of a human being remains one forever, even after his death. It is in this sense that Paul too writes (1 Cor 8:13): "if flesh causes my brother to stumble, I shall not eat flesh through the αἰών," using this term in place of "throughout my life."

The dimension of the αἰῶνες is for Didymus, just as for Origen, something that precedes the *telos*. The *telos*, which coincides with the apokatastasis, is beyond all αἰῶνες and is characterised by absolute eternity (ἀϊδιότης). This is why Didymus calls the eternal life, which lasts not only throughout the future aeon (ζωὴ αἰώνιος), but beyond all aeons in eternity (ζωὴ ἀίδιος), "ὑπεραιώνιος salvation" (*Comm. in Zach.* 2,370). Salvation, unlike punishment and death, which can only be αἰώνιοι, does not come to an end with the end of the aeons, but continues beyond all aeons, in the eventual apokatastasis.

Again like Origen, and like Gregory Nyssen, Didymus also drew a close connection between resurrection and restoration. According to him, just as according to those two Patristic philosophers, the risen body will be a spiritual body, as is clear in *Comm. in Zac.* 3,183. In this work, however, whose public was not restricted to his own disciples, but was much broader, Didymus simplified Origen's theory, preferring a "more introductory" treatment (εἰσαγωγικώτερον). Thus, for instance, throughout this work Origen's technical terms εἶδος and ὑποκείμενον (the former denoting the metaphysical form of the body, which will be identical in the present and in the risen body; the latter indicating the material substratum of the corruptible body, which is in constant flux) are not employed. Didymus clearly aimed at avoiding the misunderstanding that these Aristotelian notions had given rise to, even though he himself had a penchant for Aristotelianism. But he renounced these technicalities for the sake of his broader public. Didymus, however, defended Origen; he took over his meditation in a comment on Ps 1:5 concerning the transformation of wheat grains into crops in 1 Cor 15:35 ff., which illustrates the continuity between the earthly and the risen body. At the same time, Didymus also underlined the transformation that will take place in the resurrection, apparently also with polemics against Methodius's misunderstandings. Indeed, that Didymus was acquainted with Methodius's works is rightly maintained by Prinzivalli.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Prinzivalli, *Magister*, 127–128.



In perfect continuity with both Origen and Nyssen, who drew a close connection between ἀνάστασις and ἀποκατάστασις, Didymus considered the eventual ἀποκατάστασις to be the spiritual aspect of the resurrection. Commenting on Psalm 44, Didymus considers the final restoration as the point at which spiritual progress will no longer be possible—this conception seems to be different from Nyssen's ἐπέκτασις—, the culminating point of the τέλος, when God will finally be “all in all” (*PsT* 328,20–22; *PTA* 12,192). Didymus refuses to admit that this culminating point will be simply the resurrection of the body. The final universal restoration will be universal salvation, understood by Didymus as the return of all souls to God, in a perfect unity that will subsume every multiplicity.<sup>42</sup> The theme of unity in apokatastasis is a distinctive Origenian heritage, which returns in Gregory Nyssen's, Ps. Dionysius's, and Maximus the Confessor's eschatology.<sup>43</sup> In *Comm. in Io.*, fr. 2, on John 3:35–36, Didymus describes the necessary purification and the eventual restoration of fallen rational creatures:

This is said about rational creatures [τῶν λογικῶν]. Since, among all of them, there are also some who have become wicked, know how these *will have a restoration* [κατάστασιν] *once they have arrived in the hands of the Son*, obviously after *rejecting the evilness* [κακίαν] that they had, and *assuming virtue* [ἀρετήν]. For one should not pay attention to those who propound sophisms, claiming that only those rational beings who have sanctity [ἀγιότητα] are called.<sup>44</sup>

An important point that emerges from this passage is that for Didymus, just as for Origen and Gregory Nyssen, the eventual apokatastasis will depend on Christ. Didymus too, like Gregory and Origen, considers the divinity to attract souls to itself through instruction and purification.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, in *In Io.* fr. 3, on John 4:24, Didymus offers the following definition of God: “essence that loves the beings it has created and takes care of them through its

<sup>42</sup> See B. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1991), 90.

<sup>43</sup> See my “Unity,” in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico*, ed. A. Di Berardino, English edition (Chicago, forthcoming).

<sup>44</sup> Ταῦτα λέγεται περὶ τῶν λογικῶν. καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις εἰσὶ καὶ χεῖρονα γενόμενα, ἐπίστησον πῶς ἔξουσιν αὐτὰ κατὰστασιν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ γενόμενα δηλονότι ἀποβαλόντα ἣν εἶχον κακίαν καὶ ἀναλαβόντα ἀρετήν· οὐ γὰρ προσεκτέον τῷ τεθειμένῳ σοφίσματα, πάντα καλεῖσθαι μόνα τὰ ἀγιότητα ἔχοντα.

<sup>45</sup> Fr. 10, on John 6:44–45: “We are attracted by the Father in that the human being has been created in the image and likeness of God, who is rational. There are the notions of virtuous actions and the *logos* of truth and knowledge. Therefore, whoever, on the basis of common notions, has heard and has been able to discern the Good, and has learnt the Father, proceeds toward Christ through the faith. Or else by means of a revelation God attracts to himself those who listen to him and learn.”

providence." Another remark on the above-quoted passage concerns the use of *κατάστασις*. The meaning of *κατάστασις* in reference to the eventual restoration and the tranquillity and peace that will reign in it is common in Didymus, who indeed prefers *κατάστασις* to *ἀποκατάστασις*—to the point that there are almost two hundred occurrences of the former noun in his extant fragments—although not always does he use the former in the sense of the latter. In *Comm. in Job* col. 2,14 the term indicates the original condition of rectitude from which a rational creature has fallen: *ἐκπεσοῦσα τῆς ὀρθῆς καταστάσεως καὶ μακαριότητος*. Likewise, in *Comm. in Eccl.* col. 232,22 the noun indicates the original unity that obtained among all rational creatures; this unity is conceived by Didymus as a unity of concord and will, as it is in Origen: *ψυχὴ μία καὶ καρδιά μία, οὐ τῷ ἀριθμῷ, ἀλλὰ τῇ ταυτοτήτι. ἡ ταυτοτής δὲ αὕτη ἡ πρώτη κατάστασις ἐστίν*. The rational creatures who fell from the original unity are interpreted by Didymus, just as by Origen, as the waters located by the Bible under the firmament in *In Gen.* col. 26,12; therefore, their condition is now evil and has no unity any more.<sup>46</sup> In *Comm. in Eccl.* col. 15,11 *κατάστασις* refers again to the original condition, the proper dwelling place of all rational creatures, which is also the place of virtue; now, this is the condition to which they have to return: *ὁ "τόπος" δὲ ἐστὶν τοῦ λογικοῦ τὸ εὖ πράττειν, τὸ διὰ ἔργων καλὰ ἐνεργεῖν. ὅταν οὖν ἐκπέσῃ τῆς τοιαύτης καταστάσεως, ἕξεδρος γέγονεν τοῦ οἰκείου τόπου. ὅταν δὲ ἀνακάμψῃ, εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν ἔρχεται κατάστασιν*. As Didymus explains better in *Comm. in Ps.* 29–34 col. 221,6, the original condition of the human being coincides with being in the image and likeness of God; when the human being gets far from this condition, it goes out of itself and loses its own identity: *κατ' εἰκόνα ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ὁμοίωσιν ἔκτισεν αὐτήν. ὅταν καταμένη ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ καταστάσει καθ' ἣν ἐκτίσθη, οὐ γίνεται ἐκτὸς ἑαυτοῦ, ἕξω ἑαυτοῦ οὐ γίνεται*. Indeed, the human being who keeps virtue also keeps the condition that is proper to the human being.<sup>47</sup>

The term *κατάστασις* in Didymus refers both to the initial and to the final unity, to the mystical state of union with God, in which the intellect is absorbed in the contemplation of God and forgets what is human,<sup>48</sup> and

<sup>46</sup> Τὰ ἀπομείναντα ἐν χεῖρονι καταστάσει λογικὰ κατὰ κακίαν ἰδίαν ταύτ' εἶναι τὰ ὑπὸ τὸ στερέωμα [...] ἐνεχόμενα ὕδατα. Ἀδύνατον γὰρ ἐστὶν τοὺς ἐν κακίᾳ ὁμοφρονῆσαι ποτε· συγχυτικὸν γὰρ αὐτῇ καὶ ἐνώσεως ἀλλότριον. Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρετὴ ἐνοποιὸν ἅτε ἀντακολουθίαν ἔχουσα.

<sup>47</sup> *In Gen.* col. 145,3: τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀρετὴν δηλοῦσης, σφζούσης τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα καὶ τὴν τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος ἀνθρώπου κατάστασιν.

<sup>48</sup> *Comm. in Job* 162,27: ὅτε ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τὸν τῶν ὅλων τέταται θεὸν καὶ τὴν ἐκεῖνου θεωρίαν, τρόπον τινὰ λήθη τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων γίνεται. ἀπὸ τῆς τοιαύτης καταστάσεως καὶ ὁ μακάριος Δαυὶδ ἔψαλλεν ὅτι· ἐπελαθόμεν τοῦ φαγεῖν τὸ(ν) ἄρτον μου ...

indicates beatitude in the next world, which awaits the virtuous: οἶδεν ὁ σπουδαῖος, ὅτι διαδέξεται αὐτὸν κατάστασις μακαρία (*Comm. in Eccl.* col. 213,12). Indeed, κατάστασις in Didymus even refers to the final θέωσις. After leaving all that is of this aeon, the rational creature, once purified from evil and vices (τὰ φαῦλα), attains its own home, which is the divine condition: εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λοιπὸν οἶκον πορεύεται ἀφείς τὸν τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου [...] θεία κατάστασις, ἐν ᾗ ἐπορεύθη ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου (*ibid.* 358,20). A process of rectification will bring about the blessed, final condition or κατάστασις of imperturbability and peace due to the grace of God; this condition will be Christ himself, again according to the notion that the final κατάστασις will be a θέωσις (*Comm. in Zach.* 1,65).<sup>49</sup>

The condition of θέωσις is that in which God is found, and God can be found only in perfect virtue, not in evil, as Origen already insisted (*Comm. in Ps.* 22–26.10 col. 102,6).<sup>50</sup> This is the second time we encounter Didymus following Origen's argument based on the eventual abolition of evil to explain how God will be able to be "all in all." Didymus depicts the eventual θέωσις well especially in *Comm. in Ps.* 35–39 col. 234,22, in which he also details, like Origen and Athanasius, that Jesus descended alone from the divine condition, but ascends with humans, so to have them too participate in the divine condition: οὐρανὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἢ θεικὴ κατάστασις· λέγεται γὰρ ἐν οὐρανῷ ὁ θεὸς εἶναι οὐχ ὅτι ἐν τόπῳ ἐστίν. [...] κατέβη δὲ μόνος Ἰησοῦς ἐκ τοῦ ἀληθῶς οὐρανοῦ, τουτέστιν τῆς καταστάσεως τῆς ἀρμοζούσης θεῷ.<sup>51</sup> The eventual θέωσις is described again by Didymus in *Fr. in Ps.* fr. 845<sup>52</sup> and in *In Gen.* col. 222,3, in which he characterises it as perfect beatitude: Ἡ καρδιά μου καὶ ἡ σὰρξ μου ἀγαλλιάσεται ἐπὶ Θεὸν ζῶντα, ὅτε ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ καταστάσει γίνεταί,

<sup>49</sup> Ἐπεταὶ δὲ τῇ τοιαύτῃ καταστάσει τὸ ἀσύγχυτον καὶ ἀτάραχον τῶν κατορθουμένων. Ὁράται δὲ ἡ εἰρήνη ἢ περὶ ἧς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμὴν ἀφίημι ὑμῖν. Δέδοται δὲ αὕτη μετὰ θείας χάριτος ἀπὸ Θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὡς παιδεύει Παῦλος. Ἀμφότερα δὲ ταῦτα, ἡ εἰρήνη καὶ ἡ χάρις φημί, ὁ Σωτὴρ ἐστίν.

<sup>50</sup> Πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ θεοῦ κατοικῶ, οὕτως ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἡμέραις θεωρῶ τὴν τερπνότητα κυρίου καὶ ἐπισκέπτομαι τὸν ναὸν αὐτοῦ. τερπνότης δὲ κυρίου ἐστίν ἢ μετουσία αὐτοῦ. καὶ ναὸς αὐτοῦ ἐστίν ἢ κατάστασις, ἐν ᾗ θεὸς εὐρίσκεται, ἐν ᾗ θεὸς οἰκεῖ. ἡ τελεία ἀρετὴ οἶκός ἐστιν θεοῦ.

<sup>51</sup> The same idea is expressed in *Fr. in Jo.* fr. 11 col. 1,2: Οὐρανὸν λέγει σημαίνεισθαι τὴν ὥσανει περιωπὴν καὶ κατάστασιν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣτις οὐχ ἑτέρα τῆς νοητῆς αὐτοῦ οὐσίας τυγχάνει; cf. *Comm. in Ps.* 35–39 col. 234,30: μόνος οὖν ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ λεγομένῳ οὐρανῷ ἐστίν, οὐχ ὅτι τόπος ἐστίν ἢ σῶμά τι ἢ ποίημα, ἀλλὰ κατάστασις, ὥσανει κατάστασις θεοῦ, περιωπὴ θεοῦ. Just as heaven is not a place, but the divine condition, so also hell is not a place but a condition: *Comm. in Eccl.* (9.8–10.20) col. 280,2: οὐκ ἐστίν γε ὁ ἅδης οὗτος τόπος ἀλλὰ κατάστασις. Gregory Nyssen in *De anima* insisted on the very same point.

<sup>52</sup> Ἐπὶ τὴν ἀκρωρείαν ἀναβερηκότας ὡς οἰκεῖν τὸν θεοῦ οἶκον φέροντας τὴν κατὰ θεὸν κατάστασιν, πληρωθέντες ἐπ' αὐτοῖς τοῦ "Ὅταν φανερωθῇ, ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα, ὅτι ὁψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθὼς ἐστίν.

μεθ' ἣν οὐκ ἔστιν ἑτέρα, εἰς ἣν οἱ φθάσαντες μακαρίζονται. This is clearly the final stage, the *telos*, after which there will be no change of state. This *telos* is "to become God," to reach a divine condition: *Comm. in Eccl.* (3–4.12) col. 101,26: ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅταν ἀποβάλῃ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ζωὴν ταύτην τὴν καθ' ἣν ἄνθρωπος, γίνεται θεός [...] εἰς θεϊκὴν κατάστασιν. Deification is union with God and adhesion to the Good, and is described again as a *κατάστασις* in *Fr. in Ps.* fr. 641a, 9.<sup>53</sup>

The final apokatastasis is depicted also in *Comm. in Zach.* 1,265 as a *κατάστασις* of peace, foreseen by Micha, after the war against the powers of evil, after which there will be no conflict left;<sup>54</sup> this idea is closely related to that of concord and unity in the *telos*. In *Comm. in Zach.* 4,224 Didymus closely relates resurrection and restoration, calling the latter "the perfect *κατάστασις*" which will take place after the achievement of virtue: ἀσθενὲς ἐνδύσεται τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν δόξαν τε καὶ δύναμιν, ἐκ ψυχικοῦ σώματος πνευματικὸν σῶμα γινόμενον [...] σφύζεται ταῦτα θεόθεν ὡς ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, τῆς τελείας καταστάσεως καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιγινομένης. Not only will the body be resurrected as spiritual and no longer psychic, but there will be a spiritual restoration of humans to their original and perfect condition, characterised by virtue and freedom from evil. The same connection between resurrection and restoration is drawn by Didymus in *Comm. in Eccl.* col. 104,27. The luminous condition or *κατάστασις* of the *telos* is described in terms of the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>55</sup> The eventual apokatastasis will be the *telos*, after which no transformation will occur, no more progress will be needed (*Comm. in Zach.* 5,164).<sup>56</sup>

The purifying nature of the otherworldly fire—another pillar that buttresses the doctrine of apokatastasis, from Clement to Origen and Gregory of Nyssa and beyond—is clarified by Didymus in *Comm. in Ps.* 20–21 col. 21,15: that fire will consume, not creatures, but evil:

<sup>53</sup> Εἰς ταύτην τὴν κατάστασιν μετὰ τὸ πορευθῆναι ὀπίσω καταφθάσας ὡς κολληθῆναι ὀπίσω οὐ εἶπετό φησιν Ἐκολλήθη ἡ ψυχὴ μου ὀπίσω σου, δηλούσης τῆς φωνῆς τῆς Ἐκολλήθη τὸ Ἠνώθη. οὕτω γὰρ ἀκουστέον καὶ τοῦ Ἀποστρυγούντες τὸ πονηρόν, κολλώμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ. ἔνωσιν τὴν πρὸς θεὸν δηλοῖ καὶ τὸ Ὁ κολλώμενος τῷ Κυρίῳ ἐν πνεύμα ἔστιν.

<sup>54</sup> Καὶ πολέμους ἐγειρόντων δαιμόνων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀντικειμένων δυνάμεων [...] Ταύτην ὑπογράφων τὴν εἰρηναίαν καὶ εὐσταθῆ κατάστασιν [...] Πῶς γὰρ ἔτι ἐκφοβῶν τις ἔσται, πάντων τῶν στάσεις καὶ πολέμους ἐγειρόντων καταλυθέντων.

<sup>55</sup> Ἐν λαμπρᾷ καταστάσει διάγουσιν οὐκ ἄλλοθεν ἄλλ' ἐξ ἑαυτῆς φωτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας οὐσης, περὶ ἧς ὁ χορὸς τῶν ἁγίων κελαδῶν φησιν. Ἐστω ἡ λαμπρότης Κυρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐφ' ἡμᾶς. Πρὸς τὴν πνευματικὴν Ἱερουσαλήμ ...

<sup>56</sup> Δεῖ γὰρ ποτε στήναι τὴν προκοπὴν, τοῦ τέλους διαδεξαμένου, οἴκου καλουμένου. Οὐ γὰρ οἶον καὶ πρεπῶδες ὑπάρχει αἰεὶ προκόπτειν μηδαμῶς ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τελευταίαν κατάστασιν, οἶκον προσαγορευομένην.

ξύλα καὶ χόρτος καὶ καλάμη ὥστε *μηκέτι ὑπάρχειν*—ἀδύνατον δέ ἐστιν οὕτως ἀφανισθῆναι, ἀλλὰ ἢ χόρτος εἰσὶν ἀφανίζονται· καὶ γὰρ τὸ πῦρ τοῦτο τὸ τῆς κολάσεως οὐκ ἐνεργεῖ εἰς οὐσίαν, ἀλλ' εἰς ἕξεις καὶ ποιότητας. ἀναλίσκει τὸ πῦρ τοῦτο οὐ κτίσματα, ἀλλὰ ποιὰς καταστάσεις, ἕξεις τοιάσδε.

It is impossible that wood, grass, and straw disappear *in such a way as not to exist any more*, but sinners will disappear *insofar as they are grass* and so on. Indeed, *this fire of the corrective punishment is not active against the substance, but against habits and qualities* [sc. bad habits and qualities]. For this fire consumes, *not creatures*, but certain conditions and certain habits.

Since no creature is evil by nature, but only because of a free choice, precisely thanks to the aforementioned purification all will be able to convert to the Good, return to their original condition, and achieve salvation:

Καλεῖ ἡμᾶς εἰς σωτηρίαν. τὸ “ἐπιστραφήσονται” δείκνυσιν ὅτι οὐδεὶς κατὰ οὐσίαν κακός ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ προαίρεσιν. εἰ δὲ ἴσχυσεν τὸ κακὸν ἐλάσαι τὴν προαίρεσιν εἰς ἄλλο τι ἄλλως, ἰσχύσει τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἀνακαλέσασθαι αὐτὴν εἰς τὴν προτέραν κατάστασιν. (*Comm. in Ps. 20–21 col. 54,20*)

He calls us *to salvation*. The verb “they will return / convert” indicates that *nobody is evil by essence*, by nature, but rather by free choice. If evil had the power to push the (human) free choice toward something else, something alien, *the Good will have the power to call it back to its original condition*.

Again, the apokatastasis is a work of God, who is the Good par excellence. This restoration will be a return to the original condition, a better and more perfect condition, after a worse one.<sup>57</sup> The return of the soul to its original condition after the perdition it has plunged into because of sin is clearly considered by Didymus, once again, to depend on Christ's work. Here, in *Comm. in Ps. 35–39 col. 267,20*, this is especially Christ's teaching work, and even that of the angels and of those who are disciples of Christ:

ὁ σωτὴρ γοῦν ἐλήλυθεν ζητῆσαι καὶ σώσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός. οὗτος ζητῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ζητεῖ, ἵνα εἰς σωτηρίαν αὐτὴν ἀγάγῃ, ἵνα κατὰ τὴν προτέραν αὐτῆς κατάστασιν ἐνέγκῃ. ὥσπερ οὖν ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦτο ποιεῖ διὰ παιδεύσεως καὶ διὰ συντελείας τῆς εἰς τὸ καλόν, οὕτω καὶ οἱ τοῦ σωτῆρος μαθηταὶ καὶ ἄγγελοι γε καὶ ἄνθρωποι τοῦτο ποιοῦσιν.

The Saviour in fact has come to *look for what was lost and save it*. He looks for the soul, *in order to lead it to salvation, to bring it back to its original condition*. Now, just as the Saviour does this *by means of instruction* and perfecting into what is good, likewise the disciples of the Saviour, both angels and human beings, do so.

<sup>57</sup> Καλεῖ αὐτοὺς πόρρω ὄντας, οὐχ ἵνα μεταβατικῶς κινηθέντες ἐκ τόπου εἰς τόπον ἔλθωσιν, ἀλλὰ ἐκ διαθέσεως εἰς διάθεσιν, ἐξ ἐλάττωτος καταστάσεως ἐπὶ τὴν μείζονα καὶ τελειότεραν (*Comm. in Ps. 29–34 col. 197,2; cf. Comm. in Ps. 35–39 col. 237,15: πληθύνεται αὐτοῦ ἡ ἀγαθότης, ὅταν καὶ τοῖς ἀνοήτοις συνκαταβαίνει, πειράται εἰσάγειν αὐτοὺς εἰς μείζονα κατάστασιν*).

Since apokatastasis must pass through death, Didymus, like Origen, Methodius, Nyssen, and Ambrose, highlights the positive value of physical death, which opens up the door to beatitude and immortality: ἀλλὰ ἐπεὶ οἱ ἀναγκασθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ζωῆς τῆς ἔξω σώματος εἰς τοῦτο ἔρχονται, θανάτου ὀνομάζεται σῶμα [...] ἀναγομένων γάρ ἐστιν τὸ εἰς ζωὴν καὶ μακαριότητα καὶ ἀθάνατον κατάστασιν ἄγεσθαι (*Comm. in Ps. 20–21* col. 36,24).

Following a week-scheme that has antecedents in Origen and will be developed especially by Maximus the Confessor, Didymus identifies the week until Friday with the time of history, the Sabbath with the end of history, and the Sunday or eighth day with apokatastasis and deification, a condition that transcends the world: τὸν ἐν ἑξ ἡμέραις κόσμον γεγεννημένον, καὶ τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ ἐν ἐβδόμῃ ἡμέρᾳ γενέσθαι οὔση ἀληθινῶ σαββάτῳ [...] ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἐπαρκεῖ πρὸς τελείαν μακαριότητα τὸ ἀργῆσαι τῶν κοσμικῶς γινομένων, δεῖ προσλαβεῖν τὴν μετὰ τὴν ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ διαγωγὴν ὑπερκόσμιον κατάστασιν οὖσαν ὁγδόην (*Fr. in Ps. fr. 31*).

Closely related to the realisation of apokatastasis, the theme, dear to Origen and Nyssen, of the final submission of all to Christ as the salvation of all appears in Didymus as well. This is what he declares commenting on John 17:1:

The Father has given to Christ the power and dominion *over all beings* [κατὰ πάντων], that *no being* [μηδέν] that has been handed to him should *perish*: for this glory, too, passes through us, because it was necessary that *the totality* of those who will have submitted to him and have arrived in the hands of the *omnipotent* [πάντα ἰσχύοντος] Logos of God *be saved* [διασσεωσμένον ἅπαξ] and remains among the goods that have no end [ἐν ἀτελευτήτοις μέναι ἀγαθοῖς], so that it needs no longer suffer the tyranny of death, *nor be liable to corruption and sins, nor have to undergo punishment for ancient evils* [τοῖς ἀρχαίοις ὑποκεῖσθαι κακοῖς].

From Didymus's commentary on *1 Corinthians*<sup>58</sup> the section on 1Cor 15 is thankfully extant. Here, in 1Cor 15:28, Paul precisely spoke of the final submission of all to Christ, and this passage was used by both Origen and Gregory Nyssen especially in his *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* to argue for the final restoration of all. Didymus in his commentary (6–7) claims that Christ's resurrection necessarily implies the resurrection of all, πάντων ἀνάστασις. What is more, thanks to faith in the risen Christ, humans are liberated, not only from death, but also from sins (ἡλευθερώσθαι τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν); all (πάντες) will enter immortality, as a consequence (ἀκόλουθον). Didymus is closely

<sup>58</sup> K. Staab, *Pauluskommentar aus der griechischen Kirche aus Katenenhandschriften gesammelt* (Münster, 1933), 6–14.

inspired by Origen also in a detail concerning St. Paul. Origen, in order to argue that God kills only with the purpose of giving a better life, adduced Paul's example: God killed Paul the persecutor (διώκτης) so to give life to Paul the apostle (ἀπόστολος).<sup>59</sup> Likewise, Didymus here observes that Paul once was a persecutor (διώκτης) but then, thanks to God's grace, came to be an apostle (ἀπόστολος).

Again in the footsteps of Origen, as is the case with Nyssen's *De anima*, Didymus affirms that each one's risen body will be the same as one's earthly body, but incorruptible and spiritual (ἄφθαρτον καὶ πνευματικόν). Commenting on 1 Cor 15:21–22, in which it is claimed that, as all die in Adam, so will all be vivified in Christ, Didymus makes it explicit that “the vivification will involve *all* those who have died in Adam [πάντων τῶν ἀποθανόντων ἐν τῷ Ἀδάμ],” that is to say, all human beings.

Again like Origen, Didymus (7–8), commenting on 1 Cor 15:23–24a, insists that an order will be followed in the *telos*. The believers will be saved first, then all the others. But all creatures will. This will be a return to the original condition and a tension to salvation:

Since Christ's resurrection precedes that of all the others, it will be the first in honour; then immediately afterwards, in the following order, will come the believers, at the coming of Christ, on the basis of the analogy of their faith; then it will be the end [τὸ τέλος], *ordered and established as corresponding to the beginning* [πρὸς ἀρχὴν διαστελλόμενον].

That the end is similar to the beginning is a typical Origenian claim, which in Origen did not entail the identity, but the superiority, of the *telos* vis-à-vis the *arkhē*. Within his discourse on the order in which all creatures will submit to Christ and attain the final salvation, Didymus (8), commenting on 1 Cor 15:24b–26, clearly expounds the union of all souls with God after their liberation from sin:

Therefore, it is necessary that Christ reign over the beings, as they progressively add themselves, up to the totality [τῆς ὅλων προκοπῆς], until *all those who are enemies because of sin* [πάντες] *have submitted to him*, and Christ has *destroyed every tyrannical power* [καταλύοντος αὐτοῦ πᾶσαν τυραννικὴν ἐξουσίαν]. After this, the first evil itself, death, is destroyed, in that every [πᾶσα] soul, *now subject to death, which is joined with evil, will be joined to Christ* [ἐννομένη αὐτῷ].

Like Origen (*Comm. in Rom.* 5,7 and elsewhere), Didymus considers the death that will be destroyed in the end to be, not merely physical death,

<sup>59</sup> See I. Ramelli, “Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah,” 59–78.

but spiritual death, i.e. the death of the soul. The final elimination of this death clearly means universal restoration for the souls and their definitive liberation from evil and death. This is obviously tantamount to universal apokatastasis. Also, like Gregory Nyssen in his *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*, who comments on the very same passage (1 Cor 15:26–28) in the footsteps of Origen,<sup>60</sup> Didymus here draws a distinction between the enemies who are creatures, who have become enemies of God due to their bad choices, but will convert and be saved, and the death of the soul, which is no creature of God, but a consequence of evil, and will be completely annihilated.

Shortly after, Didymus, interpreting 1 Cor 15:41, postulates different degrees of brightness in the risen bodies, depending on the rational creatures' degree of closeness to the Good. The risen body "must endure for a long lifespan [εἰς μακράωνα ζωὴν], either in punishment or in glory." The body—again according to a typical Origenian conception—will follow the progress of the soul, until it becomes spiritual. Indeed, first the soul, in its progress, will reach the level of spirit (προκόπτουσα ἡ ψυχὴ ἐπὶ τὸ πνευματικὸν ἀναβαίνει); then the body, too, will become spiritual, luminous, and glorious.<sup>61</sup> When all have become incorruptible, death will be annihilated (11–12):

Just as, when virtue is present, vice cannot subsist, likewise, when immortality is present, *death disappears* [ἀφανίζεται]; therefore, when what is mortal puts on immortality, *death is defeated and annihilated* [καταπίνεται].

Didymus also points out that the risen body's incorruptibility is not a possession by nature, but is a gift of God's grace, χάριτι θεοῦ. In this case, too, Didymus is following Origen.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, it is significant that at the end of his comments on 1 Cor 16:17–18 Didymus cites exactly the only Patristic authority ever cited explicitly by him: Origen. Didymus mentions Origen in a fully positive way, making his own agreement full clear: "Likewise, Origen, too, thinks that, as for virtue, the spirit has something more than the soul, even though the soul is spirit as well."

<sup>60</sup> See I. Ramelli, "1 Cor 15:24–26: Submission of Enemies and Annihilation of Evil and Death," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 74 (2008) 241–258; *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* ... (1 Cor 15,27–28)," 259–274.

<sup>61</sup> To ascribe to Didymus a theory of the disappearance of bodies or the denial of the resurrection (see Daley, *Hope*, 90) is probably inaccurate. In Didymus's view, as it seems, just like the soul, so also the body becomes spiritual; it is transformed, more than disappearing. A development of this idea will be found in Evagrius.

<sup>62</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah."



Didymus mentions Origen by name also in his so-called *In epistulas canonicas brevis enarratio*,<sup>63</sup> 8, in respect to the incompatibility between ἀρετή and κακία, in that the latter attracts the friendship of the world, while the former attracts that of God. Again, in 9 Didymus explicitly refers to Origen's interpretation (ἐρμηνεία) of the words κατὰ πρόγνωσιν Θεοῦ; before the creation of the world, God chose or foresaw in Christ the elect. Like Origen, Didymus in 27 insists that one must not do good out of fear, slavishly, but on the basis of knowledge and the logos.

Again like Origen, on p. 34 he explains that punishment will be commensurate with sin. Sufferings will continue until the Lord, as a judge, has made the sinner just (ἕως ὃ κριτὴς αὐτὸν δικαιοῦσει). In the case of Christ, this must be understood in a very literal sense: Christ indeed *makes* sinners just; from sinners, he transforms them into just, through instruction and suffering. Origen also observed that Christ's work will be accomplished only when he has made just even the last of all sinners. Precisely as Origen insisted that nothing, not even our free will, shall be able to separate us from the love of God (*Comm. in Rom.* 5,10,212–222),<sup>64</sup> so does Didymus in 44 claim that no evil and no deception can separate creatures from the love of God. Another Origenian thought related to soteriology is found in 68, in which Didymus expounds Christ's action of taking away the sin of the world in order to restore humans into their original image and likeness of God their creator. Thus human beings will be again “worthy of being loved.” Christ descended into the world out of love (ἀγάπη) and for the manifestation of the beauty—κάλλος, which is expression of goodness<sup>65</sup>—of those who were created in the image of God. This soteriology of beauty will be developed especially by another Origenian, Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>66</sup>

Didymus, for instance in *Comm. in Gen.* II p. 100,<sup>67</sup> criticised the Stoic doctrine of the succession of aeons, but without mentioning Origen, who in turn

<sup>63</sup> Ed. F. Zoepfl, *Didymi Alexandrini in epistulas canonicas brevis enarratio* (Münster, 1914), 1–4, 6–15, 17–25, 27–52, 57–63, 66–69, 73–91, 95–96.

<sup>64</sup> *Neque uita neque mors neque praesentia neque futura neque angeli neque uirtutes neque altitudo neque profundum neque creatura alia poterit nos separare a caritate Dei [...]. Ex quibus omnibus euidenter ostenditur quod, si haec omnia quae enumerauit apostolus separare nos non possunt a caritate Dei [...], multo magis libertas arbitrii nos ab eius caritate separare non poterit.*

<sup>65</sup> See my “Good,” in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, ed. A. Di Berardino, English edition (forthcoming in Chicago from InterVarsity).

<sup>66</sup> See I. Ramelli, “Good/Beauty, Agathon/Kalon,” in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 356–363.

<sup>67</sup> L. Doutreleau–P. Nautin, *Didyme l'Aveugle. Sur la Genèse*, 2 vols., SChr 233; 244 (Paris 1976; 1978).

rejected, as I have already pointed out, the determinism of that doctrine. Didymus's criticisms here can by no means be referred to Origen, but he is rather following Origen in attacking the Stoic theory of periodical apokatastasis.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, Socrates, *HE* 4,25, not only praises Didymus as extremely learned and a defender of orthodoxy, but he also attests that he wrote ὑπομνήματα, now lost, devoted to the defence and clarification of Origen's *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, because Origen's philosophical masterpiece was widely misunderstood (μηδὲ γὰρ αὐτοὺς δύνασθαι, φησὶν, εἰλεῖν τὴν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς σύνεσιν), as is attested by Pamphilus as well. This commentary is quoted by Jerome under the name *commentarioli Didymi* (*C. Ruf.* 1).<sup>69</sup> This was a remarkable and unique intellectual enterprise: the first Christian commentary on a work of a Christian author outside the Bible. The exceptional character of this work points to the exceptional value of Origen's masterpiece in Didymus's view and in that of his readership, to its difficulty, and to the attacks launched on it by adversaries either because of a lack of understanding or out of sheer hostility (the main reasons were already pointed out by Pamphilus: according to him, these were either envy or ignorance).

In the fragments from Didymus's *Comm. in Rom.*<sup>70</sup> 3–4 it is explained that when Paul speaks of “sin” he means the devil, whom Origen in *Princ.* 3,6,5 identified with the death of the soul, the “last enemy,” at the same time foreseeing that the devil as a creature will convert to God, ceasing to be enemy and death, and will thus be saved. What will disappear will be death, physical death and spiritual death, which is sin. In the same passage, indeed, Didymus goes on to say that the dominion of death will have an end because it had a beginning: death is οὐκ ἀναρχος ἢ ἀγέννητος. This is the same argument subsequently used by Evagrius, his disciple, in reference to evil: since there was a time when evil did not exist, there will be necessarily a time when it will no more exist (*KG* 1,40).<sup>71</sup>

Didymus also takes over Clement's and Origen's motif of Christ as a teacher in *Comm. in II Cor.* 15.<sup>72</sup> He observes that teachers are deeply concerned with the salvation of their disciples, and Christ is the common teacher (17). Didymus also insists (16) on the vivifying power of Christ as

<sup>68</sup> For Origen's own attack see above, section on Origen.

<sup>69</sup> See also *ibid.* 2: *Didymi σχόλιον, in quo ille casso labore conatur alienum errorem defendere, quod Origenes quidem bene dixerit, sed nos simplices homines et cicures Enniani nec illius sapientiam nec tuam, qui interpretatus es, intelligere possumus.*

<sup>70</sup> Staab, *Pauluskommentar*, 1–6.

<sup>71</sup> See below in this same chapter, section on Evagrius.

<sup>72</sup> Staab, *Pauluskommentar*, 14–44.

God, who liberates people from both physical and spiritual death. Didymus follows Origen's insistence on the announcement of the resurrection given in Scripture, which he interprets not only as a resurrection from physical death, but also as a resurrection from spiritual death.<sup>73</sup> Didymus is on the same line:

God not only keeps creatures in life, but also brings back to life those who have lost it, by resurrecting them from the dead. This is why we rise again, not by confidence in our own power, lest we should fall off life, but in God, who *will vivify us* [ζωοποιήσει] *even in case we should end up in death* [ἐν νεκρότητι] [...] Now, this is *not written concerning ordinary life and death* [οὐ περὶ τοῦ κοινοῦ ζῆν καὶ θανάτου], because he says: "God, who has liberated, and liberates, and will liberate again, from such a serious death; God in whom we have put our hope." For he is speaking of *the death that seizes the soul away from life in the world to come* [τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ κατασπώντος τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς].

God liberates people, and resurrects them, even from spiritual death in the world to come, the "second death." This is the death Didymus refers to at 42 as well: those who sin without repenting are already dead of the death of the soul: *τεθνήκασι τὸν ψυχῆς θάνατον*.<sup>74</sup> This is, indeed, the death in respect to which, according to Origen, the soul is mortal: "The soul is mortal [θνητή] in respect to the real death [τοῦ ὄντως θανάτου]" (*Dial. cum Her.* 24–30). Likewise, in *Comm. in Matth.* 12,33,12, in reference to the eventual elimination of death announced by Paul in 1 Cor 15:26 Origen remarks: "The enemy of this life, which will be destroyed as the last enemy of all his enemies, is death, the death that the sinning soul dies [θάνατός ἐστιν ὃν ψυχὴ ἡ ἁμαρτάνουσα ἀποθνήσκει]."

At 22 Didymus develops another notion that Origen had already formulated: that God kills only in order to give a better life:

For, if the letter even kills, however it brings a kind of death that is *worthy of being praised by the killed*: for, when they lived in ignorance and evilness before receiving the teaching of the Law, after receiving it they are put to death, thus *losing the evil life that they had* [θανατοῦνται ἀποβάλλοντες ἦν εἶχον πονηράν ζωὴν]. In this way, indeed, they will be ready to receive the *vivification of the Spirit*. Whoever is in evil lives according to evil, and whoever errs because of it *loses the life one had according to evil* [κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ κακόν], in order to proceed, by *doing good* [διὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ποιήσεως], *toward the blessed life* [ἐπὶ τὸ μακαρίως ζῆν].

<sup>73</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah."

<sup>74</sup> For the philosophical background of this notion, from Roman Stoicism and Philo up to Origen, see I. Ramelli, "1Tim 5:6 and the Notion and Terminology of Spiritual Death: Hellenistic Moral Philosophy in the Pastoral Epistles," *Aevum* 84 (2010) 3–16.

At 25 Didymus underlines Paul's confidence in the eventual salvation and in the heavenly abode prepared for the other world from the beginning of creation. This abode is identified with the body, which, once lost in physical death, will be restored in an incorruptible form. At the general resurrection, "Those who have neither faith nor virtue, albeit they do receive the spiritual body that is called the heavenly abode, will be found naked, because they have not striven to obtain the garment of the interior human being," τοῦ ἔσω ἀνθρώπου (27).<sup>75</sup> Didymus also insists on the inclusion of humanity (29) in Christ's death and resurrection;<sup>76</sup> like Athanasius, he emphasises the renovation of humanity brought about by Christ, and the reconciliation between humanity and God.<sup>77</sup> At 41, after remembering Paul's rapture to the third heaven, Didymus depicts Paradise as a school for souls, in which these learn the divine teachings. It is a παιδευτήριον θείων μαθημάτων. This conception is also found in Origen and Gregory Nyssen, who thought that souls mature and improve not only in this world, but also in the other, without any interruption, and that they will receive instruction from the angels and from Christ. At 44 Didymus emphasises again that nothing can separate us from the love of God, thanks to "the grace of the Lord Jesus, who saves not by virtue of human works, but as a gift."

The biblical book of Job, according to Didymus, who devoted a commentary to it,<sup>78</sup> is important in that it addresses the question of God's κρίματα or judgements, and teaches that nothing happens to human beings without God's permission and that—in accord with Stoicism—the true goods are not among external things that do not depend on our decision, which are ἀδιάφορα, but only in virtue, which depends on the choice of every rational creature. Like Origen, Didymus explains that these creatures were originally equal, and became different because of their free choices. The negative influence of the devil is subordinated to God's will and aims at the good.

<sup>75</sup> For the development of this theme in Syriac Patristics see G. Lettieri–C. Noce–I. Ramelli, *Prospettive cristiane*, I, Quaderni del Vestire 3 (Rome, 2007). On the symbolic import of clothing in early Christianity: K. Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress* (London, 2011).

<sup>76</sup> "For, if Christ, he alone, died for the sake of all, then all have died [...] Therefore, if he died and was resurrected for us and for our sake, we live, resurrected, together with him, no longer for our own sake, that is, in a human way, but for the sake of the One who has suffered and has been resurrected with us."

<sup>77</sup> "Whoever participates in Christ is a new creature. For the Saviour establishes in this person the two unified in a single human being [...] We were enemies, closely imprisoned by the deception of fraud and sins, but we have been reconciled, having obtained remission from Christ and through Christ: God has reconciled us with him, through the Lord, who has died and has been resurrected for us."

<sup>78</sup> Ed. A. Henrichs, *Didymos der Blinde. Kommentar zu Hiob*, 1 (Bonn, 1968), 24–308.

The example adduced by Didymus is that in which Paul handed Hymenaeus and Alexander to the devil, not for their perdition, but “that they might learn [παιδευθῶσι] not to blaspheme any more” (2). Didymus remarks that the devil has an intellect with which he can reflect and convert (μετανοεῖν), because the cause of his evilness is not God but he himself (18), and God’s παιδευσίς is effective. At 23 Didymus insists that nobody can be pulled away from the hands of the Father; even when Job is persecuted by the devil in his own body, Didymus observes that not even the devil could separate Job from God’s love.

Didymus sees Job as a Stoic, who receives from God both apparent goods and apparent evils, in the awareness that these are all ἀδιάφορα. Like Clement, Origen, and Nyssen, Didymus assimilates the Lord to a physician who employs drastic remedies, but for no other end than salvation (πρὸς σωτηρίαν, 50). On the basis of the pre-natal election of prophets and of Jacob, Didymus maintains that souls are not σύγχρονοι τοῖς σώμασι (57), but he does not specify here whether he is speaking of the present, heavy, corruptible, and mortal bodies or of bodies tout court. According to him, Job in fact blamed the day of the fall of humanity, and prays that rational creatures may return to virtue, and remain in it stably, without falling again into a worse κατάστασις, a fall that in the eventual apokatastasis will be prevented by the disappearance of evil (59–60). It is clear that Didymus shared with Origen the conviction that there will be no further fall after the eventual apokatastasis (contrary to accusations levelled against Origen and reflected still in Augustine). This is a fundamental point in their polemic against the Stoic conception of apokatastasis. That the eventual disappearance of evil clearly depends on God is manifested by the fact that the aforementioned prayer is addressed to God, who defeats the evil one, i.e., the cause of the fall of humanity. Following 1 Cor 15:26 and Origen’s identification of the devil with the “last enemy” mentioned there, that is, spiritual death (*Princ.* 3,6,5), Didymus proclaims: “The devil, who has the power of death, will be destroyed” (63). And it is not the γυμνὴ θεότης, but the incarnated Christ, who will destroy it. For Christ dwelt on earth for the σωτηρία of humanity (94).

I have already illustrated how precisely in this work Didymus shows to be aware of the polysemy of the term αἰώνιος (76). This is what allows him to avoid the misunderstanding of the biblical expressions πῦρ αἰώνιον, θάνατος αἰώνιος, and κόλασις αἰώνιος as “eternal fire,” “eternal death,” and “eternal punishment.” He rather understands the αἰώνιοι punishments as belonging to the future αἰών, as is clear in the paraphrase he offers of this expression, μέλλοντος αἰῶνος καὶ κολάσεως, “the future world and the future corrective punishment” (117). In the αἰών to come, in which there will be no

difference between men and women (79), all will be judged according to their deeds, but—again, in one of Origen's and Didymus's favourite Pauline quotations—nothing will be able to separate us from God's love (90).

Didymus also supports the thesis—typical of Origen, Gregory Nyssen, Evagrius, ps. Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, Eriugena ...—of the ontological non-subsistence of evil, which emerges only from a wrong choice of rational creatures' free will: τὸ κακὸν οὐδ' ὑφιστάμενον [...] εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ προαιρέσει τοῦ ἐνεργούντος (114–115); “when the agent ceases to want evil, the latter has *no more ontological subsistence* [οὐκέτι σύστασιν ἔχει] [...] for evil is not a *substance* [οὐσία], but it arises and receives its existence [τὸ εἶναι] in the moral choice: when the deception ceases, evil too disappears.” In Didymus's ethical intellectualism, evil is the product of a bad choice, which results from a deception, of a lack of exact knowledge. I shall show that this position is consistent with Didymus's interpretation of the original sin, which is close to Gregory Nyssen's. Again like Nyssen, Didymus also insists that virtue is natural for humans, while vice, or evilness, is alien (141).

Didymus's dependence on Origen is also evident from his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 5–6,<sup>79</sup> both because he often allegorises the text and in general uses Origen's method, and because his specific interpretations frequently follow those of Origen. Like Origen, indeed, Didymus in 156 distinguishes those who have a slavish spirit and avoid doing evil only out of fear, and those who have a spirit of children and do good out of love: “He is a slave because he has the spirit of a slave and is not yet a child: he is *oppressed by the fear of the judgement* and avoids evil—if one can actually say that he does avoid it—out of fear of punishment [φόβῳ κολάσεως]. Thus, he is a slave, out of *fear of the law that oppresses him*.” Didymus, again like Origen, in 156 also identifies the death of the soul with the ἔσχατος θάνατος (probably a reminiscence of 1 Cor 15:26: ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς θάνατος), but he opposes to it the redemption and resurrection operated by Christ, who, for Didymus just as for Origen,<sup>80</sup> can raise from death not only the body, but also the soul, having it live “for eternity” (but death is never declared to last “for eternity”):

A dead has been *risen*, even after *losing the soul*, since that impious soul had *descended to the last death* [εἰς ἔσχατον θάνατον]. Therefore, the Saviour, when he *detaches someone from sin and impiety*, behold, has *operated a resurrection* [ἀνάστασιν] [...] the daughter of the head of the synagogue did not die because she had been *made just* [δικαιωθεῖσα] [...] Those who *have risen in the soul* [κατὰ ψυχὴν ἀναστάντες] then possess it *for eternity* [εἰς αἰεί].

<sup>79</sup> Ed. J. Kramer, *Didymos der Blinde. Kommentar zum Ecclesiastes*, 3 (Bonn, 1970), 2–86.

<sup>80</sup> See on this Ramelli, “Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah.”

Spiritual resurrection clearly means eternal life and salvation. After death, in Hades, reason is kept and therefore also the capacity for making choices. If death is spiritual, on the other hand, it is possible to revive from it by means of repentance (279 f.). Moreover, Didymus too, like Origen, considers sins to be a punishment to themselves (301).

In *Comm. in Gen.* 2B Didymus insists, like Origen, on the notion that God wants the conversion, and not the death, of the sinner (1,24). And, like Origen in his *Dialogue on Heraclides*, Didymus interprets animals in an allegorical way, as the savageness (ἀγριότης) of evilness (καχία) that must convert to the meekness of virtue (πρασιότης ἀρετή, p. 53). Beasts, especially ferocious beasts, are a symbol of evilness; their transformation into humans symbolises humans' conversion to virtue. The human being's command over animals is likewise interpreted by Didymus as its command over passions and the forces of evil (60; 70). Like Origen, Didymus accepts the anthropological trichotomy into σῶμα, νοῦς, and ψυχή (55), and interprets the human being in Gen 1:26 primarily (μάλιστα) as its (intellectual) soul, as the "inner human being" of which Philo and Origen had spoken. Likewise, Didymus identifies the "Image of God" (εἰκὼν Θεοῦ) in the human being not with the human compound, but with the inner human being, νοῦς and ψυχή (56–57). The first εἰκὼν Θεοῦ is Christ, who is also the principle of the perfect ὁμοίωσις that is reserved for the *telos* (59). Every human being is "in the image of God" in that it is provided with *logos*, and is capable of becoming "in the likeness of God." This distinction between image and likeness is the same as is found in Origen. The woman is in the image of God like the man and ὁμοούσιος to the man (62); mystically, the woman is wisdom and the faith that gives fruits, or else the soul that receives teachings from God (69), or again the allegoresis of sense-perception as opposed to the intellect (95), the last interpretation being a heritage from Philo and Origen. The Genesis malediction against the woman is interpreted by Didymus in reference to the labours of the Church who brings her children to salvation and submission to Christ (102–103).

Just as Origen and Gregory Nyssen, Didymus also highlights the harmony of all creatures before the arrival of evil (68; 72). In a perspective characterised by ethical intellectualism, the original sin is considered by Didymus, just as by Gregory, to be essentially due to a deception, that of the devil, which made the soul see things opposite to the truth (82–83). The original sin was thus due to a deception, a lack of knowledge. It depended on an obfuscated intellectual sight. While commenting on Gen 3:9, Didymus remarks that God, the "spring of goodness," recalls humanity even after sins (91) and attests that some understood God's question to Adam, "Where are

you?" as a sign that Adam had received a body subject to dimensionality or διάστημα (91). Didymus notes, like Gregory Nyssen, that the original sin produced a loss of παρρησία (92), that which, according to Gregory in *De anima*, will be restored in the *telos*.<sup>81</sup> The equation between the Church and humanity, too, in 93 is the same as is drawn by Gregory Nyssen in *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*; both of them derived it from Origen.<sup>82</sup> Commenting on Gen 3:21, Didymus, like Origen, identifies the "skin tunics," not with bodies tout court, but with the heavy bodies, different in genders and material, whereas the ἄνθρωπος κατ' εἰκῶνα is immaterial (ἄϋλος) and endowed with a σῶμα ὀργανικόν, whereas now it has a body that is δερμάτινον, φθαρτόν, and παχύ. Here too, Didymus, like Origen, claims that the devil is not evil by nature, but as a result of a transformation or μεταβολή (109). He also explains that God did not chase the protoplasts far from Paradise, in order to facilitate their return to the Good (112–113). As Clement and Origen did, Didymus also insists that every action of divine Providence is aimed at the salvation of rational creatures (116).

*Eusebius "of Pamphilus," a Reticent Supporter of Apokatastasis*

I have already remarked, in my treatment of Pamphilus, that Eusebius chose to describe himself as "Eusebius of Pamphilus," out of veneration for his holy teacher, remarkably the first apologist of Origen. This choice probably reveals a definite intellectual intention. Indeed, in doing so, given that Pamphilus in turn was the disciple of Pierius, the so-called "Origen the Younger," Eusebius clearly established his affiliation to a precise line of Christian scholarship, an Alexandrian-Caesarean line: that of Origen, with the chain, Origen → Pierius → Pamphilus → Eusebius. Notably, all the rings anterior to Eusebius in this chain are represented by supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis—not surprisingly, given that all of them are faithful Origenians. And, obviously, in his work as a heresiologist<sup>83</sup> Eusebius does

<sup>81</sup> See my "Baptism in Gregory of Nyssa's Theology and its Orientation to Eschatology," in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, eds. D. Hellholm–T. Vegge–O. Norderval–C.D. Hellholm, II, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 176 (Berlin, 2011), 1205–1232.

<sup>82</sup> See Ramelli, "Clement's Notion of the Logos."

<sup>83</sup> On which see most recently M. Willing, *Eusebius von Cäsarea als Häreseograph* (Berlin–New York, 2008).



not include Origen and his followers among Christian “heresies.” On the contrary, he collaborated with Pamphilus in composing the apology for Origen (in *HE* 6,33,4 Eusebius declares that it was composed by him and by Pamphilus, συμπονήσαντες), provided a eulogistic and apologetic portrait of Origen in Book 6 of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*,<sup>84</sup> and expressed high admiration of Origen also elsewhere, calling him “one of the greatest” and praising his zeal for the Greek disciplines in *PE* 6,10,50, a trait also emphasised in *HE* 6.<sup>85</sup>

Eusebius, who defended Origen against Christian accusations of being more of a Platonist than of a Christian by remarking that Plato never wrote a Περὶ Ἀρχῶν and Origen did not entertain the same ideas as Plato did on the ἀρχαί (since his ἀρχαί were the Christian Trinity),<sup>86</sup> nevertheless on his own was an admirer of Plato, “the most excellent of Greek philosophers” (*PE* 11,1,3).<sup>87</sup> In *PE* 11–13, indeed, Eusebius presents Platonism as the philosophy that is closest to the Hebrew and Christian philosophy: according to Eusebius, in line with Justin, Clement, and Origen, this is because Plato depended on Scripture.<sup>88</sup> Eusebius supposes that he either learnt the Judaic philosophy via an oral transmission or found the truth by himself, or else was divinely inspired. It is again Eusebius who explains Constantine’s point in *Or. ad Sanct. coetum* 9, a work that was significantly handed down in the manuscripts of Eusebius,<sup>89</sup> where the Nicene faith about the Father and

<sup>84</sup> On Eusebius’s apologetic agenda there see my “Origen, Patristic Philosophy.”

<sup>85</sup> See also my “The Birth of the Rome-Alexandria Connection: The Early Sources on Mark and Philo, and the Petrine Tradition,” *Studia Philonica Annual* 23 (2011) 69–95 for Origen’s portrait and its impressive convergences with Philo’s in Eusebius.

<sup>86</sup> Documentation in “Origen, Patristic Philosophy.”

<sup>87</sup> See É. des Places, “Eusèbe de Césarée juge de Platon dans la *Préparation Évangélique*,” in *Mélanges A. Diès* (Paris, 1966), 69–77; my “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism,” Part 3.

<sup>88</sup> Penland, “Eusebius Philosophus?” 221 observes that Eusebius often describes Plato as a “translator” of the Hebrew Scripture into Greek: see *PE* 11,9,6; 11,26,8; 12,13,1; 12,21,6; 13 *prol.*

<sup>89</sup> That Eusebius is behind several important theological points of Constantine is suspected by Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism,” who also suggests a possible role of Eusebius in Constantine’s introduction of the ὁμοούσιος formula at Nicaea. That both the first and the second credal formula at Nicaea in fact came from Eusebius, with Constantine’s powerful support, is suggested also by Eustathius of Antioch *ap. Theodoret HE* 1,8,1,3 (the first document was a product “of the blasphemy of Eusebius” and the second of people “who put forward the name of peace” and had the new document approved; the latter are identified with Constantine by Barnes, “Emperor and Bishops,” 59). Eusebius himself says that the creed was produced by him and supported by Constantine. The actual extent to which Constantine knew Greek and could write of theological arguments in Greek is unsure. At Nicaea, at the opening, before the beginning of the Council works, Constantine sat on a small stool and Eusebius of Nicomedia delivered a panegyric to him, to which Constantine replied in Latin. An interpreter translated the emperor’s words into Greek. It is Eusebius of Caesarea

the Son is claimed to be consistent with Plato's theology, of course as conveyed by Middle Platonism and the beginning of Neoplatonism. Now, I think that this is first of all Eusebius's own conviction. Eusebius's Plato was obviously filtered through Middle and Neoplatonism, especially Numenius and many other authors whom Eusebius cites, such as Plutarch, Atticus, Plotinus, Porphyry, Amelius, and so on. It is no accident that *PE* 14,5–9 provides a history of the Academy until Carneades on the basis of Numenius, and that *PE* 11,21 is entitled Περὶ τῶν τριῶν ἀρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων, just like Plotinus, *Enn.* 5,1 (of course at the hands of Porphyry).<sup>90</sup> On the basis of the Second Letter—the very same that was also cited by Plotinus in *Enn.* 5,1,8 to provide a basis for his doctrine of the three hypostases—, Eusebius argues here that Plato's Trinitarian theology depends on the “Jewish oracles,” that is to say, the *Sapientia Salomonis*. This theology was interpreted, he maintains, by “the exegetes of Plato,” i.e. Plotinus and his followers, as a reference to the three hypostases, and by the Christian tradition as a reference to the Trinity. This tradition was represented above all by Clement, who interpreted the “three kings” of the Second Letter in reference to both the Trinity and the Platonic hypostases, which will be theorised by Plotinus. Indeed, in *PE* 11,15–19 Eusebius identifies the Biblical Wisdom with Philo's Logos, Plotinus's Nous, and Numenius's “second god.”<sup>91</sup>

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himself who attests to this in *VC* 3,10–13,1 (on this unfinished work see B. Bleckmann–H. Schneider, *Eusebius von Caesarea. De vita Constantini. Ueber das Leben Konstantins* [Turnhout, 2007]). For the recent critical revision of Nicaea see at least Ayres, *Nicaea*; H. Pietras, “Lettera di Costantino alla chiesa di Alessandria e Lettera del Sinodo di Nicea agli Egiziani (325): i falsi sconosciuti da Atanasio?” *Gregorianum* 89 (2008) 727–739; and M.C. Steenberg, *On God and Man* (London, 2009), 104–127. A book by Henryk Pietras on Nicaea, in English translation, is forthcoming. M. Edwards, “Alexander of Alexandria and the Homoousion,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012) 482–502 thinks, as I do, that Constantine introduced ὁμοούσιος upon his ecclesiastical mentors' advice; among these, Alexander.

<sup>90</sup> For Origen's possible influence on Porphyry on this score see Ramelli, “Origen ... and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis.”

<sup>91</sup> On Eusebius's non-“Arianism” see, e.g., Ramelli, “Origen's Anti-Subordinationism.” It may also be telling that in *HE* 1,2,3 the Syriac translation (in two mss. of the V and VI cent.), as well as the Latin, entirely omits the expression δεύτερον μετὰ τὸν Πατέρα in reference to the Son. Likewise in *HE* 1,2,9 both the Syriac and the Latin do not read, as the Greek does, τοῦτον δεύτερον μετὰ τὸν Πατέρα Κύριον, but respectively ܠܠܗܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ, “he is the true Lord together with the Father,” and likewise *Dominus sit ipse cum Domino*. This may be significant because the Greek *Vorlage* of the Syriac is much older than the extant Greek mss.; it “might reveal a very old, perhaps even the oldest, stage of the transmission” (S. Toda, “The Syriac Version of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* revisited,” 337). As for Rufinus's translation, it is also based on very early Greek mss., available at the end of the IV and the beginning of the V cent. The convergence between Rufinus and the Syriac shows that Rufinus cannot be accused of having altered Eusebius's text to bring it closer to “orthodoxy.”

Whatever the date(s) of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*,<sup>92</sup> Eusebius was the intellectual inspirer of Constantine, the emperor who not only became a Christian himself,<sup>93</sup> but finally recognised Christianity as a *religio licita* in the Roman Empire after three centuries during which it had been a *superstitio illicita*.<sup>94</sup> Origen seems to have been the intellectual inspirer of a possible (albeit failed) anticipation of this, with Severus Alexander. Origen had theological conversations with Julia Mamaea, the empress, the mother of Alexander. According to Eusebius himself (*HE* 6,21,3–4), Julia, due to the fame of Origen, “deemed it very important to be honoured by the visit of this man.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, while he was staying in Antioch, she invited him and sent him an armed escort to accompany him to her place; there, they had conversations for some time. Also in the light of the strong influence that Severan empresses exercised on their relatives, I suspect that Julia’s high esteem for Origen, whom she invited to speak exactly on *theology* (to “have experience of his understanding of divine things [περὶ τὰ θεῖα συνέσεως]”), very probably influenced her son Alexander’s apparently odd decision, of which we are informed by the *Historia Augusta* (*Al. Sev.* 22,4): Alexander, in his own *lararium*, syncretistically venerated Abraham, Orpheus, Christ, and Apollonius

<sup>92</sup> T. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (London, 1981), 113, argued that its first edition was composed way before Diocletian’s persecution; in his view, there were no less than five editions, which spanned over a period of no less than thirty years (“The Editions of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 21, 1980, 191–201). R. Burgess, “The Dates and Editions of Eusebius’ *Chronici Canones* and *Historia Ecclesiastica*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 48 (1997) 471–504, argued that the *HE* was composed between 311 and 313 and published in at least three editions between 313 and 325.

<sup>93</sup> I do not intend to enter here the discussion of what exactly the conversion of Constantine was. Certainly its impact on the Empire was enormous. On him see now at least T. Barnes, *Constantine. Dynasty, Religion, and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 2011), according to whom Constantine did not remain tolerant in religious matters until the end of his reign. Eusebius’s assimilation of Constantine qua emperor to Christ-God should be limited; see recently F. Jourdan, “Le Logos et l’empereur, nouveaux Orphée: postérité d’une image entrée dans la littérature avec Clément d’Alexandrie,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008) 319–333, referring specifically to *Laud. Const.* 2,14,4–5. On Eusebius as a model for Themistius in the theorisation of the “divinity” of the emperor see my “L’inedito *Pròs basiléa* di Temistio, con due postille e due tavole,” in coll. with E. Amato, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 99 (2006) 1–67, and I. Ramelli, *Il βασιλεύς come νόμος ἔμψυχος tra diritto naturale e diritto divino*, *Memorie dell’Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici* 34 (Naples, Bibliopolis, 2006).

<sup>94</sup> Perhaps starting from the *senatus consultum* in the day of Tiberius of which Tertullian speaks and to which a Porphyrian fragment clearly refers, as is argued by I. Ramelli, “Il senatusconsulto del 35 contro i Cristiani in un frammento porfiriano,” prefaced by M. Sordi, *Aevum* 78 (2004) 59–67; eadem, “Constantine and the Reversal of the Effects of the Senatusconsultum of AD 35,” forthcoming in *Sveti Car Konstantin* (Niš, 2012); eadem, “Constantine: The Legal Recognition of Christianity and its Antecedents,” *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia* 2013.

<sup>95</sup> Julia is described as “most pious” by Eusebius (θεοσεβέστατη, *ibid.*). Orosius (*Hist.* 7,18,7) even considers her a Christian.

of Tyana, and intended to include Christ in the Roman pantheon, recognising Christianity as a legal religion (ibid. 43,7). However, he was discouraged by pagan religious officials, very probably haruspices, experts in the *Etrusca disciplina* (*ab his qui, consulentes sacra, reppererant omnes Christianos futuros si id fecisset et reliqua templa deserenda*). The official recognition of Christianity, likely suggested to the emperor by Mamaea under the influence of Origen, was not in their best interest (all the more so in that Origen overtly denigrated haruspicy<sup>96</sup>). Thus, Alexander followed their advice for many reasons, among which there are his consideration for haruspicy<sup>97</sup> and his concern about the Senate—in which religious traditionalism and even the Etruscan component was strong—,<sup>98</sup> all the more after the tragic example of Elagabalus. At any rate, Alexander at least abstained from persecuting the Christians and his reign crowned an age of (de facto) tolerance.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Origen regarded divination as a work of the demons (CC 4,92), especially that form of divination that was performed through animal sacrifice (θυσιαί): precisely the kind of divination that was typical of haruspicy (CC 1,36; 2,14). On Patristic criticism of divination—although with little about Origen—see J.M. Nieto Ibáñez, “Pagan Divination in the [sic] Greek Patristic. The Terms Used in Criticising Oracles,” *Adamantius* 16 (2010) 308–312.

<sup>97</sup> See I. Ramelli, *Cultura e religione etrusca nel mondo romano. La cultura etrusca alla fine dell'indipendenza*, Studi di Storia Greca e Romana 8 (Alessandria, 2003), Ch. 4.

<sup>98</sup> In the *Historia Augusta*, Severus Alexander is presented as an ideal sovereign from the point of view of the Senate; this debated document ascribes to him some reforms aimed at the restoration of the power of the Senate. Indeed, in the Severan age the Senate included many Etruscan members. The Etruscan senatorial families were very proud of their origins, flourished in that period and favoured the role of haruspices—especially those officially inscribed in the Order of haruspices—in public occasions. In the third century CE the collaboration between the haruspices and the Senate was close, as is demonstrated by the support that haruspices constantly provided to Senators even when some emperors showed hostility toward the Senate. A meaningful coincidence can be observed between the flourishing of the Etruscan families in the Senate and the flourishing of haruspicy. Not long after the Severan age, there will be two Roman emperors of Etruscan origin, Pupienus Maximus and Vibius Gallus (see Ramelli, *Cultura e religione etrusca*, Ch. 4 and Appendix 1). I do not enter the huge question of the authorship of the *Historia Augusta*. It is usually, but not universally, assumed to be by one single author between the IV and the V cent. See, e.g. D. Pausch, “*Libellus non tam diserte quam fideliter scriptus*: Unreliable Narration in the *Historia Augusta*,” *Ancient Narrative* 8 (2010) 115–135; cf., at least, R. Syme, *Ammianus and the Historia Augusta* (Oxford, 1968); Idem, *Emperors and Biographies* (Oxford, 1971); T.D. Barnes, *The Sources of the Historia Augusta* (Bruxelles, 1978); R. Syme, *Historia Augusta Papers* (Oxford, 1983), the *Historiae Augustae Colloquia*, and A. Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford, 2011).

<sup>99</sup> The expression “de facto tolerance” is by M. Sordi, *I Cristiani e l'Impero Romano* (Milan, 1983), 87–103; “tolleranza di fatto.” On this de facto tolerance in the Severan age see E. Dal Covolo, *I Severi e il Cristianesimo* (Rome, 1989); Idem, “La religione a Roma tra antico e nuovo: l'età dei Severi,” *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura religiosa* 30 (1994) 237–246; Idem, “I Severi precursori di Costantino? Per una messa a punto delle ricerche sui Severi e il Cristianesimo,”

Both Origen and Eusebius, albeit to different extents, were the Christian counsellors of emperors who wanted to recognise Christianity, besides being the strongest Christian apologists of their times (Origen with his *Contra Celsum* and Eusebius with his *Praeparatio* and *Demonstratio Evangelica* and his *General Elementary Introduction*,<sup>100</sup> all of which were profoundly influenced by the *Contra Celsum*,<sup>101</sup> but also with his *Chronicon* and his *Historia Ecclesiastica*<sup>102</sup>). What is more, I have argued elsewhere that Eusebius, precisely qua intellectual inspirer of Constantine,<sup>103</sup> may have influenced the

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*Augustinianum* 35 (1995) 605–622; Idem, “I Severi e il Cristianesimo. Dieci anni dopo,” in *Gli imperatori Severi. Storia Archeologia Religione*, eds. E. Dal Covolo–G. Rinaldi (Rome, 1997), 187–196; Idem, “I Severi e il Cristianesimo. Un decennio di ricerche (1986–1996),” *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia* 8 (1999) 43–51.

<sup>100</sup> Shortly before the so-called Edict of Milan, Eusebius composed this Introduction to the study of Scripture, of which only fragments survive and a portion of Books 6–9 known as *Eclogae Propheticae*. A.P. Johnson, “Eusebius the Educator: The Context of the General Elementary Introduction,” in *Reconsidering Eusebius. Collected Papers on Literary, Historical, and Theological Issues*, eds. S. Inowlocki–C. Zamagni (Leiden, 2011), 99–118, *praes.* 107, stresses that Eusebius in the first part of this work was addressing pagans whom he hoped to convert.

<sup>101</sup> S. Morlet, “Eusebius’ Polemic Against Porphyry: A Reassessment,” in *Reconsidering Eusebius*, 119–150, argues that Eusebius’s *Demonstratio Evangelica* is not conceived primarily as a specific response to Porphyry, but is closely inspired by Origen’s *Contra Celsum*.

<sup>102</sup> On Eusebius’s *Chronicon* as an anti-Porphyrian work, and more specifically as a reply to Porphyry’s *De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*, see now O. Andrei, “Per un commento alla *Historia ecclesiastica* di Eusebio di Cesarea: i *Chronici canones* quale *philosophia ex oraculis* antiporfiriana,” *Adamantius* 14 (2008) 151–190. For an “apologetic of ethnicity” and not only of religion in Eusebius see recently A.P. Johnson, “Greek ethnicity in Eusebius’ *Praeparatio evangelica*,” *American Journal of Philosophy* 128 (2007) 95–118, more widely developed in Idem, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius’ Praeparatio evangelica* (Oxford, 2006); M. Verdoner, *Narrated Reality: the Historia ecclesiastica of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Frankfurt a.M., 2011), 109–147 likewise shows how Eusebius depicted a trans-historical Christian community of bishops, martyrs, and scholars within a Christian *ethnos* from which Jews, pagans, and “heretics” are—not quite systematically, though—excluded (on p. 84 she also classifies the *HE* within the frame of traditional Hellenistic-Roman historiography as for time, subject, form, and style; to this, an apologetical agenda is superimposed; I would note that “pagan” historiographers, too, had their own apologetical agendas). Differently T.D. Barnes, “Eusebius of Caesarea,” *The Expository Times* 121,1 (2009) 1–14, with a treatment of Eusebius’s *Praeparatio Evangelica* and *Historia Ecclesiastica*. On the *Demonstratio Evangelica* see now S. Morlet, *La Démonstration évangélique d’Eusèbe de Césarée* (Paris, 2010). On the novelty of Eusebius’s church history see at least Grafton–Williams, *Christianity*, who underline Eusebius’s indebtedness to Origen, with my review in *Adamantius* 14 (2008), 637–641, and A. Louth, “Eusebius and the Birth of Church History,” in *Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, 266–274.

<sup>103</sup> On Eusebius as the true ideologist of the budding Christian empire see P. Athanassiadi, *Vers la pensée unique: la montée de l’intolérance dans l’Antiquité tardive* (Paris, 2010), esp. Ch. 2. As for Eusebius as biographer of Constantine, Bruno Bleckmann argues that Eusebius is the author of the *De vita Constantini* in his introduction to *Eusebius von Caesarea, Das Leben des Konstantin*, tr. H. Schneider (Turnhout, 2007), 7–106; Eusebius, however, left this work unfinished. On pp. 54–63 Bleckmann hypothesises that the vision of Constantine before the

introduction of the *ἐμοούσιος* formula in the Nicene creed (which, as he himself tells in his Letter to his church, was formally proposed by Constantine to the Nicene fathers), in which case he did so by relying on the theology of Origen.<sup>104</sup>

More specifically, as for the doctrine of apokatastasis, its presence in Eusebius's thought is generally overlooked by scholars,<sup>105</sup> also because he usually tried hard not to treat eschatological matters. Indeed, he endeavoured to avoid dealing precisely with the doctrine of apokatastasis (this is evident not only when he speaks in his own voice, but even, I find, when he quotes from other authors: thus, when in his *Praeparatio evangelica* he reports long excerpts from Bardaisan's work against Fate, he stops exactly before the beginning of the final eschatological section in which Bardaisan clearly expounded the doctrine of apokatastasis, which can scarcely be fortuitous<sup>106</sup>). But this does not reveal indifference or hostility to this doctrine; rather, it indicates that Eusebius felt the need to be circumspect, precisely in order to conceal his own *sympathy* for this theory. Indeed, a close analysis reveals Eusebius's adherence to the doctrine of apokatastasis.

His terminological awareness and the rigour with which he employs the lexicon of eternity, first of all, is meaningful.<sup>107</sup> When he speaks in his own voice or in contexts relating to philosophy, to express the notion of eternity Eusebius prefers *αἰδιος*, which often occurs in passages where he reproduces philosophical vocabulary, either in reference to other philosophers, especially in the *Praeparatio evangelica*, or in his own right. The use of the Biblical adjective *αἰώνιος* is generally confined to quotations from, or reminiscences of, Scripture. Eusebius's terminological use is fully compatible with the doctrine of apokatastasis. Indeed, he consistently makes a distinction in usage: *αἰώνιος* principally indicates what pertains to the world to come and

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battle of the Milvian Bridge should be regarded as the official version of the "conversion" of Constantine, a version that stems from the later part of his reign; in 312 CE the *labarum* was simply a magical symbol of victory.

<sup>104</sup> See my "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism."

<sup>105</sup> See e.g. R.M. Grant, "Eusebius and His Church History," in *Essays M.S. Ensslin* (Valley Forge, 1972), 233–247; M. Simonetti, "Eusebio e Origene," *Augustinianum* 26 (1986) 323–334; F. Thielman, "Another Look at the Eschatology of Eusebius of Caesarea," *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987) 226–237; W. Kinzig, *Novitas Christiana* (Göttingen, 1994); Grafton–Williams, *Christianity*, 133–232. His silence on eschatology has been ascribed to scarce interest (e.g., F. Trisoglio, "Eusebio di Cesarea e l'eschatologia," *Augustinianum* 18 [1978] 173–182) or to realised perfection under Constantine (J. Sirinelli, *Les vues historiques d'Eusèbe de Césarée* [Dakar, 1961], 480–481).

<sup>106</sup> See Ramelli, *Bardaisan of Edessa*, 131–138.

<sup>107</sup> Complete analysis in Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 142–157.

means “eternal” only in reference to God, in Scriptural echoes, while *ἄϊδιος* indicates eternity in the strict or philosophical sense, in reference to God, to the co-eternity of the Son with the Father, and intelligible entities, with specific declarations that what is *ἄϊδιος* transcends time or is immutable in time. Remarkably, Eusebius *never* employs *ἄϊδιος* to modify future punishment, but he often applies it to life in the world to come. In *Eccl. theol.* p. 244,18, he states that eternal life is a divine and heavenly joy, the life not of the flesh, which is an indifferent thing, a Stoic *ἀδιάφορον*, but of the soul, inasmuch as this is eternal in the proper sense, *ἄϊδιος*. In *Comm. in Ps.* PG 23,1009,11, life is said to be eternal proper (*ἄϊδιος*) and immortal (*ἀθάνατος*). In *DE* 4,14,1 Eusebius explains the reason why life is absolutely eternal (*ἄϊδιος*): because eternal life (*ζωὴ ἄϊδιος*) is the life of God, who is absolutely eternal, and the life of God is immortality.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, eternal life is called “absolutely eternal [*ἄϊδιος*] immortality” in *HE* 3,26,2. Every creature that participates in the Holy Spirit is *αἰώνιος* (destined to live in the world to come) and has obtained *ἄϊδιος* life, that is, life truly eternal (*Const. or. ad sanct. coet.* 9,6). At 12,2 eternal life is called the future and true life, the reward of obedience to God, life incorruptible and eternal, *ἄφθαρτος καὶ ἄϊδιος*. Christ is the bread of eternal life (*ἄϊδιος*, *Intr. Gen. Elem.* p. 55,18). Likewise, the crown of the person who has struggled against evilness is absolutely eternal (*ἄϊδιος*, *Const. or. ad sanct. coet.* 15,4). Those who have been cured by God’s treatment owe to piety eternal gratitude (*ἄϊδιος*), and an infinite multitude is in need of healing, because it is hostile to God and to piety, which is “a true promise of immortality” (*ibid.* 21,4). Christ is “the captain of immortality and the guide to absolutely eternal life” (*ἄϊδιος*, *Const. or. ad sanct. coet.* 26,2).

It is significant that, while Eusebius refers *ἄϊδιος* so many times to life and beatitude, he *never* refers it to death or punishment in the future world. This indicates that he regards life and beatitude in the world to come as eternal in the proper sense, but not so punishment, fire and death: these are described by him as taking place the other world (*αἰώνια*), but not as strictly eternal. In fact, Eusebius knew and had in mind Origen’s argument in *Comm. in Rom.* 5,7: only life is eternal; death cannot be eternal precisely because it is life that is eternal, and these two propositions, “life is eternal” and “death is eternal,” are two logic contradictories. This is why in *Theoph.* fr. 3,113, Eusebius states that the eternal (*ἄϊδιος*) life announced by Christ is stronger than any death (*παντὸς θανάτου κρείττονα* = *Laud. Const.* 15,6). This argument was a forceful point for buttressing the doctrine of apokatastasis.

<sup>108</sup> The divine life is called *ἄϊδιος* also *ibid.* 6,15,4 and in *Comm. in Ps.* PG 23,1133,20.

Eusebius's inclination for the apokatastasis theory, notwithstanding his care to avoid this theme, is revealed by several passages, for instance in *PE* 7,18,9. Here, Eusebius presents the eventual apokatastasis as a "rectification," a "setting right" of sin and the restoration of humanity to its original perfection:

It is necessary to strive after piety, first of all, to the highest degree; *the original sin must be rectified with subsequent remedies* [τὸ πρῶτως πλημμεληθὲν δευτέροις αἰσίοις ἐπιδιορθοῦσθαι], and it is necessary to rush to the return and restoration to the condition that is proper and familiar (to humanity) [ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν οἰκείων ἀναδρομὴν τε καὶ ἀποκατάστασιν]. For the end [τέλος] of human nature is not here on earth, and it is not a reduction to corruption and perdition, but it is up *there, from where the first* [sc. human being, or rational creature] *fell down* [ἐκεῖσε ὅθεν καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἀπέσφηλε].

This whole passage reflects a definitely Origenian concept of apokatastasis.<sup>109</sup> The restoration to the original condition of humanity, lost after the fall, is identified with the very end or τέλος of humanity. This identification was inspired by Paul himself, who described the eventual universal submission to Christ and God's being "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28) with the τέλος, and was taken up by Clement of Alexandria.<sup>110</sup> Apokatastasis is also described here by Eusebius as a return to the original condition of humanity, a condition that is proper and familiar to it (τὰ οἰκεία). Eusebius is perfectly in line with Origen's identification of the restoration with a return to a condition that is "proper and familiar": ἀποκατάστασις ἐστὶν εἰς τὰ οἰκεία; this conviction will be taken over by Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>111</sup> In *Eccl. theol.* 2,9,4 Eusebius, like Origen and Nyssen, also uses τὸ ἀρχαῖον, "the ancient state," to indicate the original condition to which apokatastasis represents a return, after an alteration: "at first she was one thing; then she became something else [ἄλλο τι], and finally is restored again to her original condition," πάλιν εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαθισταμένη.

Eusebius, again like Origen, thought that the eventual apokatastasis is essentially a work of Christ. Like Origen, he states that Christ-Logos, being the Way to the Father, purifies all those who run that way, leaving nobody contaminated by sin, and can thereby restore all to the Father:

<sup>109</sup> For Origen's influence upon Eusebius's notion of apokatastasis see I. Ramelli, "Origen, Eusebius, and the Doctrine of Apokatastasis," in *Eusebius of Caesarea: Traditions and Innovations*, eds. A. Johnson–J. Schott (Cambridge, MA, 2013).

<sup>110</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section on Clement. He stated that St. Paul "teaches that the τέλος is the hoped-for ἀποκατάστασις."

<sup>111</sup> See my "The Doctrine of *Oikeiosis* in Gregory of Nyssa's Theological Thought: Reconstructing Gregory's Creative Reception of Stoicism," Lecture at the Twelfth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, Leuven 14–17 September 2010, forthcoming in Leiden.



The salvific [σωτήριος] Logos, who leads to the Father those who walk through it, taking them by hand, and *restoring* [ἀποκαθιστάς] them to the Kingdom of Heavens [...] *Nobody who walks this Way enters without having been purified* [ἀκάθαρτος].  
(*Comm. in Is.* 2,9)

In *In Luc.* PG 24,580,21–24, Eusebius plays on the twofold meaning of physical and spiritual healing and restoration: “First, he will *restore* [ἀποκαταστήσει] them to *safety and good health*, after opening the eyes of the blind and *healing every illness and every weakness of their souls* [τῶν ψυχῶν αὐτῶν]. Then, he will prepare for them *the spiritual banquet* [πνευματικὸν δεῖπνον].” Jesus restored people to life or health, not only in a physical sense, but also on the spiritual plane, with a spiritual restoration: this duplicity of planes, already pointed out by Origen in reference to healing—resurrection—restoration, is developed by Eusebius as well.<sup>112</sup> Eusebius sees the resurrection as a spiritual restoration in addition to the restoration of the body from dissolution to integrity. In *Comm. in Ps.* PG 23,1285,56 he describes the eventual resurrection as a renovation (ἀνακαινίζεσθαι) and a restoration or apokatastasis; what is more, the definition of resurrection as restoration that he uses is exactly the same as that which will be offered by Gregory of Nyssa:

Eusebius: ἡ γὰρ ἀνάστασις εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἐστὶν ἀποκατάστασις.  
resurrection is a restoration to our original condition.

Gregory: ἀνάστασις ἐστὶν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἀποκατάστασις.  
resurrection is the restoration of our nature to its original condition.

Both Eusebius and Gregory relied on Origen in their description of the resurrection as the restoration of humanity to its original, prelapsarian condition, which clearly entails the absence of sin and evil in the final restoration.<sup>113</sup> From Origen, Eusebius also took over the idea of divine punishments as educative, healing and purifying, which is an important premise of the doctrine of apokatastasis. The connection between instructive punishment and apokatastasis is particularly clear in *DE* 10,6,3: “after being instructed by punishment for a short time [εἰς βραχὺ παιδευθέντες], they will be restored again to their previous condition,” ὥς τὸ πρὶν αὐθις ἀποκατασταθήσονται.

<sup>112</sup> For this duplicity of levels in Origen see Ramelli, “Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah,” and for a specific example of this idea in Origen’s exegesis, Eadem, “Spiritual Weakness, Illness, and Death in 1 Cor 11:30,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130 (2011) 145–163. On Eusebius see *DE* 9,13,4; *Const. or. ad sanct. coet.* 11.15; cf. *HE* 5,7,4.

<sup>113</sup> A corresponding definition is found in *Comm. in Is.* 1,83,120: “you will be restored again to your original condition,” αὐθις ἀποκατασταθήσῃ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον. Eusebius also depicts resurrection as a restoration to life (πάλιν εἰς τὸ ζῆν ἀποκατάστασις) in *Const. Or. ad sanct. coet.* 11,12.

Eusebius's penchant for the apokatastasis theory is also patent, for instance, in his exegesis of Jeremiah. Eusebius was familiar with Origen's own exegesis of Jeremiah, where the theme of apokatastasis is prominent due to the prophet's insistence on the motif of the return or restoration of Israel. Origen interpreted it as an allusion to the final apokatastasis, and Eusebius seems to have done so as well. Eusebius cites Jeremiah in reference to apokatastasis in *Comm. in Ps.* PG 23,92,7: "After their fall [sc. of the Hebrews], He shapes them again, and *restores them again to their original condition* [πάλιν εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαταστήσαι]." The very terminology of apokatastasis is clear. The final apokatastasis is described by Eusebius as the return or restoration of all, or at least all Christians,<sup>114</sup> to unity: "the gathering and restoration of all believers—those who have become worthy of the holy city of God—to one and the same choir" (τὴν εἰς ἓνα χορὸν ἀποκατάστασιν, *Comm. in Ps.* 23,1049,22). Eusebius in many passages even refers the notion, and the very term, of apokatastasis to Christ's return to God after his resurrection.<sup>115</sup> In *Eccl. theol.* 1,20,79 he depicts the evangelical episode of the Transfiguration as a type of Jesus's restoration (ἀποκαθιστάμενον) to his eternal and pre-existent divinity in unity with the Father.

Like Origen,<sup>116</sup> Eusebius also interpreted Acts 3:21 ("the times of universal restoration [τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων], of which God spoke through his holy prophets from time immemorial") in reference to the universal restoration that will take place in the end, and this in many passages. In *Eccl. theol.* 3,14,2 Eusebius refers the "times of universal restoration" to the second coming of Christ, situated in the future, in the end. And in *C. Marc.* 2,4,11 he interprets the words "the times of universal restoration" in Acts 3:21 as the other world, in which *all beings* will experience a perfect restoration:

For, what else does "until the times of universal restoration" signify to us, if not the world to come [αἰῶνα μέλλοντα], in which *all beings must receive their perfect restoration* [δεῖ πάντα τῆς τελείας τυχεῖν ἀποκαταστάσεως]? [...] On the occasion of *universal restoration* [ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως ἀπάντων], Paul said that creation itself will be *transformed* [μεταβληθῆσθαι] from slavery into freedom. For he says: "Creation itself will be liberated from the slavery of corruption to the freedom of the children of God."

<sup>114</sup> For Origen, that all will be restored implies that all, in the meantime, will have become Christians.

<sup>115</sup> *HE* 1,2,24; *DE* 4,16,42; 5,1,28; 6,1,2; 7,1,39; *Comm. in Ps.* 23,720,6. See also *Comm. in Ps.* 23,312,8, where the implied reference is to Christ.

<sup>116</sup> Especially in *Hom. in Jer.* 14,18 and *Comm. in Matth.* 17,19.

This passage emphasises that the eventual apokatastasis will be universal. It will involve all creatures; all beings will be restored, and perfectly at that. In *Eccl. theol.* 3,9,1 (cf. 3,13,1–3) Eusebius interprets again Acts 3:21 in connection with Paul's prediction of the final liberation of all creation from corruption. And *ibid.* 3,16 he interprets the reference to "breaking into pieces" in Psalm 2:9 as evidence of the restoration: the Son's action of breaking his enemies into pieces must be understood as aimed at remoulding them, as is confirmed by Jer 18:6–10, that is, to restore them to their original condition.

Eusebius reads Psalm 14 in reference to the restoration or ἀποκατάστασις of the perfect (*Comm. in Ps.* PG 23,68,30). Likewise, he deems Psalm 124 entirely devoted to the idea of apokatastasis (ρκδ'. ἀποκαταστάσεως, *ibid.* PG 23,72,26). That this apokatastasis is eschatological is proved by the inscriptions of the immediately following Psalms: "125: *Expectation of the Future*; 126: *Edification of the Church*; 127: *The Call of the Nations*; 128: *The Victory of the Army of Christ*." Psalm 124, too, is thus to be read in an eschatological light, given that Eusebius, like Origen and then Gregory Nyssen after him, reads the Psalms as an ordered sequence. He interprets the LXX title of Psalm 5, *To the End, on Her Who Inherits*, in an eschatological sense—suggested by the mention of the τέλος—in reference to the eventual apokatastasis, understood as the inheritance of God; in his exegesis he cites Psalm 15: "you are the one who restores [ἀποκαθιστῶν] my inheritance to me" (*Comm. in Ps.* PG 23,581,25–30; cf. *ibid.* 23,157,38, in which the same sentence is repeated).

Eusebius's interest in eschatology and close dependence on Origen in this respect is further confirmed by his exegesis of Luke (PG 24,549,6–36).<sup>117</sup> Especially in 549,6–36 Eusebius, while commenting on the Transfiguration episode in the gospel of Luke, reveals his eschatological universalism. He has certainly in mind Origen's statement in Περὶ Ἀρχῶν: "and not only in few or in many, but in all God will be all" (3,6,3), and the analogous one in *Comm. in*

<sup>117</sup> This work, which was probably composed after 311 CE, is considered by Aaron Johnson either a commentary or a set of homilies ("The Ends of Transfiguration: The Importance of Eusebius of Caesarea's Commentary on Luke," paper presented at the NAPS meeting, May 2010; see also his article "The Tenth Book of Eusebius' *General Elementary Introduction*: A Critique of the Wallace-Hadrill Thesis," *Journal of Theological Studies* 62 (2010) 144–160 and [jts.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/02/17/jts.flr001.full.pdf](http://jts.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/02/17/jts.flr001.full.pdf)), with a preference for the former, against Wallace Hadrill's assumption that Eusebius never wrote a commentary on Luke, but what we have should be identified with his *General Elementary Introduction* or *Eclogae propheticae*. Some features therein, such as simplicity and repetitions, might point more to homilies than to a commentary. In either case, Eusebius was following Origen, who did write both homilies and a lost commentary on Luke.

Io. 6,284, where he expands on John 1:29: Christ, God's Lamb, takes away "the sin, *not only of few, but of the whole world.*" Perfection will not be confined to few people, but it will extend to all. This is exactly what Eusebius repeats at least thrice in less than thirty lines in this passage: at the end of the world, *not only* Moses, Elijah, and three disciples will be with Christ, *but all* the prophets, the patriarchs, and the just will.<sup>118</sup> Then, the Godhead will manifest itself *not only* to Moses, who moreover could not see its face but only its back, *but to all the saints*, and *all* will be able to say that they see the glory of the Lord with an uncovered face.<sup>119</sup> At that stage, *not only* three disciples will fall upon their face, *but all creatures* will, since all knees will bend in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld.<sup>120</sup> This last, inclusive and universalist passage from Phil 2:10–11 is remarkably one of the favourite passages of Origen in support of apokatastasis, along with 1 Cor 15:28.

Moreover, the same scheme, "not only ... but," with a crescendo from a partial present state to a full eschatological reality, occurs thrice more in the above-mentioned passage (so that the whole amount of the occurrences of this scheme is even *six* in less than thirty lines). First: in the end, Christ will lift up his people *not only* onto a high mountain, *but* even to heaven.<sup>121</sup> Then, his divinity will shine forth, *not only* like the sun, *but* as a light that goes beyond everything, either sense-perceptible or intelligible.<sup>122</sup> And then, the Father will *not just* speak from a cloud, *but* will glorify the Son directly.<sup>123</sup>

Eusebius's exegesis of Isaiah is also significant.<sup>124</sup> In line with the words of the prophet, Eusebius foresees that sinners will be punished, which is symbolised by the destruction of their cities (Isa 25:2): "Regarding those who

<sup>118</sup> Greek: ἐν δὲ τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος, ἐπειδὴν μετὰ τῆς δόξης τῆς πατρικῆς ὁ Κύριος ἀφίκηται, οὐκέτι Μωϋσῆς μόνον καὶ Ἡλίας δορυφορήσουσιν αὐτόν, οὐδὲ τρεῖς μόνοι τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτῷ συνένονται, ἀλλὰ πάντες προφήται καὶ πατριάρχαι καὶ δίκαιοι.

<sup>119</sup> Οὐ γὰρ ὡς πάλαι τῷ Μωϋσῇ ποτε ἔλεγεν ὅτι, Τὰ ὀπίσω μου ὄψιαι, τὸ δὲ πρόσωπόν μου οὐκ ὀφθήσεται σοι, οὕτω καὶ τότε ποιήσει, ἀλλ' οὕτως ἑαυτὸν παρέξει τοῖς ἁγίοις, ὡς δύνασθαι πάντας λέγειν, Ἡμεῖς δέ, ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν Κυρίου κατοπτρίζομενοι, τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν.

<sup>120</sup> Οὕτε οὐκέτι ὥσπερ τότε οἱ τρεῖς μαθηταὶ μόνοι ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρους ἀκούσαντες τῆς φωνῆς ἐπὶ πρόσωπον ἔπεσον, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν, ἀλλὰ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψει ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων.

<sup>121</sup> Οὐκ εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλόν, ἀλλ' εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνάξει τοὺς ἀξίους τῆς αὐτοῦ θεότητος.

<sup>122</sup> Τότε δὲ λάμψει ἡ θεότης αὐτοῦ οὐχ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ πᾶν ἐπινοούμενον ἔν τε αἰσθητοῖς καὶ ἐν νοητοῖς γεννητὸν φῶς.

<sup>123</sup> Καὶ τότε οὐ νεφέλῃ βοήσει, οὐδὲ διὰ νεφέλης ὁ Πατήρ μαρτυρήσει τῷ Υἱῷ, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς δι' ἑαυτοῦ δίχα παντὸς ἐπισκιάσματος καὶ δίχα παντὸς ἐρμηνέως αὐτῷ τῷ ἔργῳ τὸν μονογενῆ αὐτοῦ Υἱὸν ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ δοξάσει [...] ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καταστήσας αὐτόν.

<sup>124</sup> One example (although not directly relevant to the issue of apokatastasis) is analysed by S. Morlet, "Le commentaire d'Eusèbe de Césarée sur Is 8,4 dans la *Démonstration évangélique* (VII, 1, 95–113): ses sources et son originalité," *Adamantius* 13 (2007) 52–63.

have perished [sc. spiritually] in this mortal life, the prophet adds: You have reduced their cities to ruins [...] The city of the impious will not be rebuilt in the world to come.” But the inhabitants themselves will be saved and will escape ruin: διασωθέντες ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐκείνων. This points to Origen’s notion of the destruction of sins for the salvation of sinners through purification. Eusebius exalts Christ as “helper and defender,” who will even save the pagans. For these would be “hopeless”—therefore Isa 25:8 says that “death swallowed” them—, but Christ, whom Eusebius calls the “Saviour of all together,” frees them from error and spiritual death and rescues countless souls from perishing:

The Saviour of *all together* / of the universe [ὁ τῶν ὅλων σωτήρ], who loves humanity [φιλόανθρωπος], having *liberated the souls of the human beings from death* [ῥυσάμενος τοῦ θανάτου τὰς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχάς] [...] removed *every tear from every face* [ἀφείλε πᾶν δάκρυον ἀπὸ παντός προσώπου] [...] *impeding the perdition of so many souls* [τὴν τῶν τοσούτων ψυχῶν ἀπώλειαν] because of his love for humanity.

Eusebius reads Isa 25:8 as a prophecy of the final destruction and vanishing of death, which had ruled over all; in this way he conflated Isa 25:8 and 1 Cor 15:26:

He will *destroy* [καταποθῆναι ποιήσει] and make *vanish* [ἀφανὲς γενέσθαι] the face of the one who had power over all [τοῦ ἐξουσιάσαντος πάντων]: death. [...] The Lord will engulf it [καταποντιεῖ] in such a way that it will *no longer appear anywhere* [μηκέτι φαίνεσθαι που αὐτόν] [...] Now, since the last enemy, death, will be *annihilated* [καταργεῖται] [...], death, which once swallowed all [καταπίνων τοὺς πάντας], will *be swallowed* in turn [καταποθήσεται].

This death, which will be destroyed as the last enemy, is interpreted by Eusebius, just as by Origen,<sup>125</sup> not only as physical death, but also as spiritual death. And Eusebius claims that it will be eliminated thanks to Christ, in particular thanks to “the anointment / chrism [χρῖσις] that has been spread on all peoples,” ἡ κεχρισμένη εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, which is identifiable with faith, as it is in Origen, *Pasch.* 25: according to Origen, too, the eventual apokatastasis will be made possible only by the fact that all will acquire faith at least in the end if not beforehand; for him, too, Christ is really the only Way to God. Eusebius goes on to say that all “will not be subject to death [ὑποχείριοι θανάτῳ] any more, but they will participate in immortality and the life of the world to come.” In order to achieve salvation and beatitude, all will need to be liberated from evil and made by Christ worthy of God’s promises; this will happen during the eschatological “reign of Christ”:

<sup>125</sup> See Ramelli, “Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah.”

While the reign of Christ will shine forth in the life of the world to come, all human beings, from absolutely all peoples, will enjoy it [ἀπολαύσουσιν οἱ ἐξ ἀπάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν], once *liberated from their ancient sins* [τῶν μὲν προτέρων ἡλευθερωμένοι κακῶν] and *made worthy of the promises of God* [τῶν δ' ἐπαγγελιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ καταξιωθησόμενοι].

Liberation will be not only from physical death, but from evil, and liberation from evil means purification and justification, transformation into a state that is "worthy of God" (a notion that was especially dear to Origen). This is an important pillar of the doctrine of apokatastasis.

Eusebius opposes the punishment of Moab (Isa 16 and Jer 31) to beatitude; however, Moab does not represent human beings at all, but the powers of evil: "Moab means the evil demon and the adverse power [τὸν πονηρὸν δαίμονα καὶ τὴν ἀντικειμένην δύναμιν] [...] From this single example it leaves to us to understand what will happen to the rest of the powers of evil [ταῖς λοιπαῖς ἀντικειμέναις δυνάμεσι]." Eusebius stresses the final destruction of death and adverse powers: "the end of death on the occasion of the Judgement, and the *destruction* [...] of the rest of the adverse powers." He contrasts this with the purification and salvation of human beings, who will finally be liberated from evil; he does not envisage, here or elsewhere, the destruction or eternal damnation of humans, which is further confirmed by the terminological analysis I have referred to above: only of life does Eusebius say that it is absolutely eternal (ἄϊδιος), and this repeatedly; of death, punishment, or fire he never says so, but he only describes them as αἰώνια. The human beings or rational creatures who are "worthy of the promises," τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν ἄξιοι, are those whom Christ will have *made worthy*. They will dwell in Christ himself, symbolised by the heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation, and Christ will be "all things" or "all goods" (πάντα) for all. Eusebius is clearly referring to 1 Cor 15:28 ("God will be all in all"), a crucial passage, as I shall show, not only for Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis, but also for Eusebius's.

The same difference between the eschatological destinies of humans and the powers of evil that I have already pointed out seems to underlie *Comm. in Is.* 1,88,53 as well. Here, Eusebius observes that the Logos of God, while it revivifies the dead and causes them to rise again, at the same time also cures their sins (ὁμοῦ καὶ ἴασιν ἀμαρτημάτων), if these are sins of human scale (εἴ ποτε τι αὐτοῖς κατ' ἀνθρώπον πεπλημμέλητο). In this way, the Logos grants them, not only resurrection, but also salvation and life in the future world: παρέξει ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀνάστασιν καὶ σωτηρίαν, καὶ ζωὴν αἰώνιον αὐτοῖς δωρήσεται. Like Origen, who followed Paul,<sup>126</sup> Eusebius too considers life eternal to be a gratuitous

<sup>126</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah."

gift of God. The impious, that is, those who have not sinned against men but against God, or have sinned in a superhuman degree, will pay the penalty beneath the earth. It is not, however, said that this punishment will be eternal, all the more in that the reference to the existence of the earth itself seems to refer to intermediate eschatology.

In *Comm. in Is.* 1,85 Eusebius describes the eventual apokatastasis as well, calling it τὸ τῶν ἀγαθῶν τέλος, “the culmination of the goods” foreseen by the prophets. In this way, Eusebius refers again to Acts 3:20–21, a fundamental passage that Origen read as the prophecy of apokatastasis (οἱ χρόνοι τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων). Eusebius, therefore, identifies the eventual apokatastasis with the “original intention” or “will” (ἀρχαία βουλή) established by God before the creation of the world and described by Eusebius, in the words of 1 Cor 15:24–28, as the submission of all enemies and the annihilation of evil and death, when God will be “all in all” at the end of all aeons:

The facts that were pre-established [προωρισμένα] *before the foundation* of the world, and will be fulfilled *at the end of the aeons* [ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων] [...] *once all evilness has been eliminated and the last enemy, death, has been destroyed, God will be “all in all”* [πάσης κακίας ἐκποδῶν ἀρθείσης καὶ τοῦ ἐσχάτου ἐχθροῦ τοῦ θανάτου καταργηθέντος, ὁ μὲν Θεὸς ἔσται πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν].

This is nothing else than the final apokatastasis. There is a clear specularity between the notion of “before the foundation of the world,” and thus “before the beginning of the aeons,” and “after the end of the aeons.”<sup>127</sup> The idea that universal restoration will come at the end of the sequence of aeons is in accord with Origen’s philosophy of history and eschatology.<sup>128</sup> The annihilation of evil is in Eusebius, as in Origen and Gregory, a premise of the final restoration, as well as a robust argument in defence of it.

But it is natural that the main evidence for Eusebius’s adherence to the doctrine of apokatastasis should come from passages in which he is commenting on 1 Cor 15:24–28, in which Paul announces the final submission of all creatures to Christ and Christ’s submission to God, who will thereby be “all in all.” 1 Cor 15:24–28 was indeed one of the strongest New Testament citations in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis, and this not only in

<sup>127</sup> See Ramelli, *Tempo ed eternità in età antica e patristica*.

<sup>128</sup> See P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology*, with my review in *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscholastica* 99 (2007) 177–181, Idem, *Origen: Philosophy of History*, with my review in *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscholastica* 100 (2008) 453–458; more specifically I. Ramelli, “Αἰώνιος and αἰών in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa,” *Studia Patristica XLVII*, eds. J. Baun–A. Cameron–M. Edwards–M. Vincent (Leuven, 2010), 57–62.

Eusebius, but also in Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>129</sup> Most of Eusebius's discussion of this passage comes in his polemic with Marcellus of Ancyra.<sup>130</sup> In *Contra Marcellum* 2,4, Eusebius, like Marcellus himself, keeps Origen as a point of reference especially in the interpretation of 1 Cor 15:24–28. Eusebius, thus, in this passage of *Contra Marcellum* announces the final submission of all beings to Christ and the destruction of evil. During the eschatological reign of Christ, who is God but also assumed humanity, the human being, who was once deceived by the devil, will be made king by the Logos, and will utterly destroy all the power of the devil: *πάσαν ἀρχὴν τοῦ διαβόλου καὶ δύναμιν καὶ ἐξουσίαν καταργήσει*. This will happen during the reign of Christ because, as Paul reveals, “he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet” (ibid. 2,4,1). Eusebius reflects that

the end/aim [τέλος] of Christ's reign is [...] that all be submitted to his feet, and when all, in the end [ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τοῦ τέλους], are finally subjected to Christ [...], he will submit to him who has subjected all to him. (ibid.)

At the end of all aeons, when all enemies have been reconciled in a submission that Eusebius, like Origen, regarded as a salvific submission,<sup>131</sup> and thus once Christ's dominion has become universal, there will come the eventual apokatastasis. In 2,4,9–10 Eusebius goes on to say that, once Christ has submitted all beings, “he will no more need this partial reign, because he will be king of absolutely all together [πάντων καθόλου],” along with the Father. After reigning alone and receiving the submission of all enemies, Christ will hand the kingdom to the Father and will continue to reign along with the Father. Then, Eusebius declares, “the human being, who once was deceived by the devil, thanks to the power of the Logos will be king and [...] will finally defeat the devil.”

Eusebius describes this exactly as “the apokatastasis.” For here he—like Origen, who read Acts 3:20–21 as a reference to the eventual apokatastasis—refers to Acts 3:20–21, stating that the restoration of humanity and the complete overcoming of evil will occur in “the times of universal restoration [ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων]” proclaimed by Acts 3:20–21. Again as Origen did, so also did Eusebius characterise apokatastasis as unity.<sup>132</sup> He maintains that the aforementioned “times of universal restoration” will come when

<sup>129</sup> Documentation in Ramelli, “Christian Soteriology.”

<sup>130</sup> On which see Chr. Beeley, “Eusebius' *Contra Marcellum*. Anti-Modalist Doctrine and Orthodox Christology,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 12 (2008) 433–452.

<sup>131</sup> See Ramelli, “Christian Soteriology.”

<sup>132</sup> See my “Unity.”



humanity attains unity with the Logos, and in the future aeon all will receive complete restoration. It is significant that Eusebius uses again the keyword ἀποκατάστασις here, and *thrice* at that, to claim that “the apokatastasis of all” will take place when all are finally liberated from captivity and can enjoy “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (with the aforementioned quotation of Rom 8:21; see above the entire quotation from *C. Marc.* 2,4,11). As I have mentioned, Rom 8:21 was already used by Origen to describe apokatastasis, especially in *Ex. ad mart.* 13, in which he explains that God will reveal his treasures “when the whole creation is delivered from the bondage of the enemy into the glorious liberty of God’s children.” Origen evidently inspired Eusebius also in this case.

Eusebius and Marcellus follow Origen, both of them. After the aeons, the eventual apokatastasis will come which is the *telos*, the end and goal of all history and of the creation itself, for Eusebius just as for Origen.<sup>133</sup> It will come when Christ hands his kingdom to the Father, after the submission of all enemies and the annihilation of evil (*ibid.* 2,4,12). This *telos* is prepared by God’s Providence: “All that which concerns us humans / all human beings [πάντα τὰ καθ’ ἡμᾶς] will receive its end and perfection [τέλους τεύξεται] thanks to God’s providence and action on the occasion of the Judgement.” Indeed, as is clear from *ibid.* 2,4,13–14, after the Judgement there will come the “rectification of all” and the vanishing of all adverse powers, or of all evil actions, obviously during Christ’s reign (i.e. its part still disjoined from that of the Father), since it is after this that the Son will submit to the Father:

After the occasion of the Judgement and the *rectification of all beings* [τὴν τῶν ἀπάντων διόρθωσιν] and the *disappearance of all opposing power/activity* [τὸν ἀφανισμόν τῆς ἀντικειμένης ἀπάσης ἐνεργείας], then will he himself submit to the one who has subjected everything to him.

This description of apokatastasis is not criticised by Eusebius, who appropriates it—and this is also why in 2,4,28 Eusebius defines Christ “the common saviour of absolutely all,” κοινὸς ἀπάντων σωτήρ—; his attack is rather on Marcellus’s Christology and “monoprosopism,”<sup>134</sup> and not his eschatology (*ibid.* 2.4.18–22). In the following section, again, Eusebius refutes only Marcellus’s Christological ideas, not the theory of universal “rectification” (διόρθωσις) and “restoration” (ἀποκατάστασις). Indeed, he reads 1 Cor 15:24–28 as a description of the final universal apokatastasis.

<sup>133</sup> For Origen see Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology*, 272–309; Ramelli, “Αἰώνιος and αἰών,” 57–62.

<sup>134</sup> See on this my “Origen’s anti-Subordinationism.”

In *Eccl. theol.* 2,8, likewise, Eusebius, albeit criticising other ideas of Marcellus, embraces the doctrine of the eventual universal apokatastasis. After the Judgement, the following events will occur, which are mentioned in the *Contra Marcellum* as well: 1) the “rectification of absolutely all beings” or “setting right of all things” (τὴν τῶν ἀπάντων διόρθωσιν); 2) “the vanishing of absolutely every adverse power / act” (τὸν ἀφανισμόν τῆς ἀντικειμένης ἀπάσης ἐνεργείας); 3) after this, Christ-Logos will submit to the Father; 4) the submission will have as a result that, “after the accomplishment and end of his work [μετὰ τὸ τέλος τῆς πράξεως],” the Logos will be one with God, that God may be “all in all.” Here Eusebius quotes, of course, 1 Cor 15:28.

Eusebius does not criticise this conception of the eventual universal apokatastasis as unity, which goes back to Origen and which Eusebius does not attack; he only blames Marcellus for thinking that for a certain time the Logos was *not* with God. In *Eccl. theol.* 3,14 Eusebius is discussing Ps. 109:1, quoted in 1 Cor 15:25 and Acts 3:21, which foretells the “times of universal apokatastasis.” And Eusebius explicitly refers these times of universal apokatastasis to the submission of all to Christ and the “time of perfection and accomplishment of all” alluded to in 1 Thess 4:16:

When the perfection and accomplishment of all will come [κατὰ τὸν τῆς συντελείας καιρόν] [...] The Apostle speaks of this saying: The Lord himself [...] will descend from heaven, and first the dead will be resurrected in Christ,<sup>135</sup> then we, those alive, [...] and we shall be always with the Lord. Indeed, the Saviour must remain in heaven [...] until the perfection and accomplishment [τῆς συντελείας]; then, at the perfection and accomplishment of all [συντέλειαν τοῦ παντός], he will make his second and glorious coming and will take his saints with him, that they may be together with him always [εἰς τὸ πάντοτε] [...] for an unlimited period [εἰς ἄπειρον αἰῶνα].

Eusebius quotes the whole of 1 Cor 15:25–28 and addresses (*ibid.* 3,15) the same issue as addressed by Gregory of Nyssa shortly after, also giving an interpretation that is the same as Gregory’s, since both of them were inspired by Origen’s interpretation of 1 Cor 15:28:<sup>136</sup> the eventual submission of the Son to the Father does not mean his inferiority or subordination to the Father, but it means the salvific submission of all, in particular all humans (who are the “body of Christ”). This submission will be salvific in that it will be, not forced, but voluntary: this, again, reflects Origen’s interpretation of 1 Cor 15:28, which entailed an equation between universal submission and

<sup>135</sup> For a justification of this translation see I. Ramelli–D. Konstan, “The Syntax of ἐν Χριστῷ in 1 Thess 4:16,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007) 579–593.

<sup>136</sup> See my “The Trinitarian Theology” for Gregory’s dependence on Origen in this respect.

universal salvation precisely based on the *voluntary* nature of this submission. Analogously, according to Eusebius the universal submission to Christ announced in 1 Cor 15:28 means voluntary adhesion and salvation: Christ is given glory by all as “the Saviour of *all together*”:

The apostle, saying that *all beings* [τὰ πάντα] will submit to the Son, indicated the obedience given *out of a free choice* [ἐξ αὐθεκουσίου προαιρέσεως], and the glory [...] that *all beings* [τὰ πάντα] will render to him qua *Saviour* and king of *all together* [τῶν ὅλων]. In the same way, also his own submission to the Father probably does not indicate anything else than [...] the *voluntary* [αὐθεκούσιον] obedience which he himself (sc. in his humanity) will render to God the Father, once he has *rendered all* [τοὺς πάντας] *worthy* of the divinity of the Father [ἀξιους τῆς πατρικῆς θεότητος].

Christ will save all in that he will make all worthy of God. In this passage, Eusebius’s eschatological universalism and doctrine of apokatastasis are extremely clear.

Shortly after, he elaborates on the link between Christ’s saving nature and his action of making all worthy of God. He repeats that Christ is “the common saviour of absolutely all” and explains that this is because during his reign he will rectify those still imperfect and heal those who will still need to be cured:

In case they are unworthy [οὐκ ἄξιοι] of it [sc. of the Father’s divinity], Christ, qua *common Saviour of absolutely all* [κοινὸς ἀπάντων Σωτὴρ], will take on his reign, a *rectifying and therapeutic reign, which will rectify those who will be still imperfect and heal those who will still need healing* [διορθωτικὴν τῶν ἀτελῶν καὶ θεραπευτικὴν τῶν θεραπέϊαν δεομένων βασιλείαν], and will reign, leading under his feet the enemies of his kingdom [τοὺς τῆς βασιλείας ἐχθρούς].

Eusebius is evidently drawing on the tradition of Christ-Physician; this was dear to Clement of Alexandria and Origen, both supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>137</sup> Eusebius is explaining that the eschatological reign of Christ will be a healing and purifying reign, which will make worthy of God those who are not yet so. Thus, when immediately afterwards Eusebius speaks of “those who are worthy of the Kingdom,” he refers, ultimately, to all, since he has just declared that Christ will “make all worthy” of it.

Eusebius repeats that Christ will set right (εὐτρεπισμένων) those who will still need to be rectified, after which, at the end of his “rectifying and therapeutic reign,” all will submit to God and thus be saved: “the saints will submit to the Son of God in a *salvific submission* [σωτήριον ὑποταγήν].” He is referring

<sup>137</sup> See S. Fernández, *Cristo médico, según Orígenes* (Rome, 1999) and here above, Ch. 1, the sections on Clement and Origen.

to all human beings, who will have been rectified and thus rendered holy by Christ. Again, the idea that this submission will be tantamount to salvation is a direct heritage from Origen. Shortly afterwards, Eusebius, like Origen, connects 1 Cor 15:28 with Phil 3:20–21,<sup>138</sup> which also depicts the eventual submission of all to Christ: he will “subject all beings [πάντα] to himself” and with this same power he will also transform human dead bodies into glorious resurrected bodies. Accordingly, Eusebius declares that human mortal bodies will be transformed by Christ (μετασχηματισμόν ποιήσει) into the glory of Christ’s body, and mortality will be engulfed by life (καταποθήσεται ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς). In 3,15–16, Eusebius embraces again, very unambiguously, Origen’s perspective in arguing that the aforementioned universal submission is salvific:

Ὑποτάξει ἑαυτῷ τὰ πάντα, καὶ τοιαύτην τινὰ τὴν σωτήριον ὑποταγὴν χρὴ νοεῖν.

He will subject *all beings* to himself, and this must be understood as a *salvific submission*.

If this submission is universal *and* salvific, it evidently entails universal salvation. This is utterly Origen’s position. This is why Eusebius declares that Christ will bring to God all those who have submitted to him:

Τοὺς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ πάντας χοροῦ δίκην περιστοιχισάμενος, τῷ Θεῷ [...] προσάξει.

He will bring and present to God *all those who have submitted to him*, having put them around himself as a choir.

These πάντας are really all beings, in light of the immediately previous declaration of the universality of the salvific submission to Christ. The notion that Christ puts them around himself can even allude to the fact that Christ will make them “his body,” given that περιστοιχίζω in the middle also refers to the assumption of a body (e.g., in Aeneas of Gaza *Dial.* PG 85,973C). Eusebius interprets 1 Cor 15:28 in the same way as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa do, also when he says that the Lord will be the source of all goods (πάντων τῶν ἀγαθῶν) for all.<sup>139</sup> This will be “the perfect accomplishment [τὸ συμπέρασμα] of Paul’s teaching in the *telos*: that God may be *all in all*,” τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι, meaning all goods for all.

This, Eusebius remarks, was foretold by an Old-Testament passage: God will inhabit not, as now, a few who are worthy (βραχεῖς τοὺς ἀξίους), but “all,” who will then have become worthy:

<sup>138</sup> On which see I. Ramelli, “*Nostra autem conversatio in caelis est* (Phil. 3.20),” *Sileno* 31 (2005) 139–158.

<sup>139</sup> For Origen and Gregory Nyssen’s view see Ramelli, “Christian Soteriology.”

But after the end and perfection of all [συντέλειαν τοῦ παντός], at the constitution of the new aeon [τοῦ νέου αἰῶνος], God *will no longer inhabit few* [οὐκέτ' ἐν βραχέσιν τισὶν ἐνοικήσει], *but all* [ἀλλ' ἐν ᾗ πασιν], those who by then have become worthy [τοῖς τότε ἄξις] of the kingdom of heavens.

This was also declared by Origen in *Princ.* 3,6,3, which, as I have pointed out, Eusebius echoes in his exegesis of Luke as well (and Eusebius's close dependence on Origen in his exegesis is not only well known, but is also receiving further confirmations from recent research<sup>140</sup>). Eusebius goes on to express another idea of Origen then taken over by Gregory of Nyssa: in the end God will be “all in all” (πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν) by offering himself to all (τῷ πᾶσιν ἑαυτὸν παρέχειν) according to each one's receptivity and ability to participate in his divinity (καθ' ὃ ἡ ἐκάστου δύναμις χωρεῖ τῆς αὐτοῦ θεότητος μεταλαγχάνειν).<sup>141</sup>

Eusebius identifies the *telos* with the eventual apokatastasis, when God will be “all in all” and will fill all, and when the Son will rejoice in God's salvific action:

The *most blessed hope* [τῆς τρισμακαρίας ἐλπίδος] and the unending and incorruptible life will be realised and established in the *aforementioned end* [ἐν τούτῳ καταστησομένης τῷ τέλει] in which God will be “all in all” [πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν] [...] *filling all* [ἐμπιπλὼν τοὺς πάντας], and the Son will exult and rejoice in the perfect act performed [τῷ κατορθώματι] [...] and will continue to reign without end [ἀτελεύτητον διατελέσει βασιλείαν].

Eusebius, quoting Paul, presents the eventual apokatastasis as “the most blessed hope,” just as Gregory Nyssen will call it in *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*, 13 Downing: “the culmination of hopes,” τὸ πέρας τῶν ἐλπιζομένων. Christ will hand and return to the Father “all of his subjects,” τοὺς ὑπ' αὐτῷ βασιλευμένους πάντας, who represent his kingdom: τὴν βασιλείαν, δηλαδὴ τοὺς ὑπ' αὐτῷ βασιλευμένους. This interpretation of the kingdom of Christ, which he eventually hands to the Father, as the sum of his subjects was already offered by Origen and will return in Gregory of Nyssa as well.<sup>142</sup>

Eusebius insists on an aspect that is central to the doctrine of apokatastasis: Christ will be able to give back “all” to the Father only *after making them perfect, saved and completely healed* (τελειωθέντας ὑπ' αὐτῷ τοὺς πάντας, σώαν καὶ κατὰ πάντα ἑρρωμένην τὴν παραθήκην [...] παραδώσει τῷ Θεῷ).

<sup>140</sup> For instance with regard to the *Quaestiones ad Stephanum* see now C. Zamagni, “Eusebius's Exegesis between Alexandria and Antioch,” in *Reconsidering Eusebius*, 151–176, with very precise and convincing examples.

<sup>141</sup> See the philosophical essay in Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*.

<sup>142</sup> See Ramelli, “Clement's Notion of the Logos.”

Indeed, Christ will have sanctified them all as high priest (here Eusebius surely remembers Origen's interpretation of Hebrews).<sup>143</sup> In this way, these "all," healed, perfected, and sanctified will thus be able to enjoy the divine goods: this situation, again, is equated by Eusebius, as by Origen, with God's being "all in all," that is, God's representing all goods for all:

Like a high priest [ἀρχιερέως] he will *sanctify all* [τοὺς πάντας] [...] that they may be filled with the unspeakable goods of the Father [τῶν τοῦ Πατρὸς ἀρρήτων ἀγαθῶν ἐμπιπλῶνται]. For it is in this sense that God will be "all in all" [πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν].

Soon after Eusebius describes the perfect unity in the apokatastasis of all, brought to perfection by the Son and handed, saved, to the Father:

Then God will be *in all* [ἐν πᾶσιν], who will *have been made perfect* [τελειωθεῖσιν] *meanwhile by the Son* [...] And the Son will hand the Kingdom to God, presenting him all those with whom he had been entrusted *safe* [σώαν τὴν παραθήκην] *and ready* [ἐπαρκοῦσαν] *for the adoration and the sanctity of the Father*. So God will be *all in all* [τὸν δὲ Θεὸν ἔσεσθαι πάντα ἐν πᾶσι] [...] representing all the goods for them [πάντα αὐτοῖς γινόμενον].

Eusebius depicts here again, for the second and third times, the final apokatastasis, in which God will be "all in all." He identifies it again with "the culmination of the most blessed hope" (τέλος τῆς τρισμακαρίας ἐλπίδος) both at the end of this passage, where it involves the Son and "all the others" (λοιποῖς ἅπασιν), and in 3,18. Here, "the most blessed end" (τὸ τρισμακάριον τέλος) is identified with the final condition in which

God, who transcends all, [...] the supreme Good beyond all, will give itself as a gift to those who constitute the kingdom of Christ [ἐαυτὸν τοῖς ὑπὸ τῷ Υἱῷ βασιλευμένοις δωρήσεται], thus coming to be all in all [πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν γινόμενος].

Since Christ, during his reign, will render worthy those who will be still unworthy of God, it is clear that God will be "all in all," that is to say, those worthy or those made worthy of this.

The beatitude that will characterise the *telos*, in the final restoration, is again described, soon after, as unity, according to Jesus's solemn prayer for unity in his priestly speech over the Last Supper in John 17.<sup>144</sup> All will

<sup>143</sup> See I. Ramelli, "The Universal and Eternal Validity of Jesus's Priestly Sacrifice: The Epistle to the Hebrews in Support of Origen's Theory of Apokatastasis," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts*, eds R.J. Bauckham–D.R. Driver–T.A. Hart–N. MacDonald (London, 2008), 210–221.

<sup>144</sup> See the volume on John 13–17 of *Novum Testamentum Patristicum*, in preparation, to appear in Göttingen.

have to be “perfected into unity” (τετελειωμένοι εἰς τὸ ἓν). Exactly like Origen, Eusebius describes the eventual apokatastasis as perfect unity, and he too buttresses this vision by means of Johannine quotations, especially the aforementioned John 17. Moreover, just as Origen did,<sup>145</sup> Eusebius also conceives of this unity, not as a unity of substances, as though it entailed a confusion and a loss of individual identities, and even the blurring of the distinction between the creatures and the Creator, but as a unity of wills in virtue, to which “all” will be brought:

Making *us all one thing* [ποιῶν ἡμᾶς ἓν τοὺς πάντας], so that we are no longer many, but *all of us are one* [οἱ πάντες εἷς], *made one with his divinity* [ἐνωθέντες αὐτοῦ τῇ θεότητι] [...] made perfect [τέλειοι κατεργασθέντες], not in a confusion of substances reduced to one [οὐ κατὰ συναλοίφην μιᾶς οὐσίας], but in the perfection of virtue brought to its apex [κατὰ δὲ τελείωσιν τῆς εἰς ἄκρον ἀρετῆς].

Thus, “all” will reach the final state of unity with God, a unity of will in that all rational creatures will have their free will oriented toward the Good, who is God. Exactly as the Son is one with the Father, so will “all” imitate this oneness: “all of us by imitation of God’s unity” (πάντας ἡμᾶς κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ μίμησιν τῆς ἐνότητος). This is all Origenian material. After refuting interpretations by Marcellus and the Sabellians in 3,9–20, Eusebius interprets other Old- and New-Testament passages as referring to the eventual apokatastasis, and clarifies further what the final unity will mean: neither a confusion of the Father and the Son in their individual substances or hypostases, nor a confusion of divinity and humanity in their respective essences or οὐσίαι.<sup>146</sup>

That Eusebius’s interpretation of 1 Cor 15:24–28 was the same as Origen’s and therefore entailed the doctrine of apokatastasis is further confirmed by *In Ps.* 9, PG 23,132:

I shall do so—he says—after I have vanquished the enemy of life, that is, death, regarding which it is said, “The last enemy will be annihilated, death.” In fact, *it will turn back, that is, to its first constitution, when it did not exist* [ἀποστραφῆσεται γὰρ εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω, τουτέστι τὴν πρώτην αὐτοῦ κατάστασιν, ὅτε μὴ ὑφεστήκει]—for *God did not create death* [ὁ γὰρ Θεὸς θάνατον οὐκ ἐποίησε], but death entered this world because of the devil’s envy—. When this has happened, all other enemies and adversaries of your Logos will be reduced to impotence and will perish as well.

<sup>145</sup> See my “Deification / Theosis” in *EBR. Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (Berlin, 2012).

<sup>146</sup> On Eusebius’s influence on the fourth-century theological debate on the Son see at least M. DelCogliano, “Eusebian Theologies of the Son as Image of God before 341,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14 (2006) 459–484; Idem, “George of Laodicea: A Historical Reassessment,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 62 (2011) 667–692.

Death will return to its original state, which is non-being, just as the powers of evil will, which will be annihilated, because God did not create either death or evil (the cause of death). This is why in the end they will return to what they were at the beginning, that is, to non-existence.

From the present analysis it also emerges that, as Origen did and as Gregory of Nyssa will do after him, the former against "Gnosticism" and the latter against "Arianism,"<sup>147</sup> Eusebius too supported the theory of apokatastasis in the theoretical framework of the defence of orthodoxy.

*Ephrem the Syrian:  
An Eschatological Universalism Grounded in Christ?*

Ephrem is not an explicit supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis. However, his reflections on Christ's therapeutic power and on his victory, not only over death, but also over hell, not only over *sheol*, but also over the devil, come very close to a universalistic perspective and constitute at least important premises to the doctrine of apokatastasis, which became widespread among later Syriac Christians. The figure and role of Christ is absolutely central to Ephrem's soteriology,<sup>148</sup> just as it was central to that of another Syriac Christian thinker, with whose works Ephrem was acquainted: Bardaisan of Edessa, who, as I have already argued,<sup>149</sup> was a supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis. Now, it is highly significant that, while Ephrem, not without misunderstandings, often criticises Bardaisan's thought (for instance, in his protology, doctrine of resurrection, anthropology, and theology),<sup>150</sup> he *never* criticises Bardaisan's doctrine of apokatastasis. This strongly suggests that he himself had a penchant for this theory.

One aspect that is very relevant to the present investigation is Ephrem's meditation concerning Christ's *descensus ad inferos* and its universally salvific import,<sup>151</sup> just as it is the case in Origen and then in Gregory Nyssen's *De tridui spatio*. In the *Acts of Pilate* Christ's *descensus ad inferos* is connected with his victory over the devil and the complete emptying of hell (cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Festal Letter* [or *Paschal homily*] 7, PG 77,552). Likewise Cyril

<sup>147</sup> See my "Origen and the Apokatastasis: A Reassessment."

<sup>148</sup> See my "La centralità del Mistero di Cristo nell'escatologia di s. Efrem," *Augustinianum* 49,2 (2009) 371–406.

<sup>149</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section on Bardaisan.

<sup>150</sup> See my *Bardaisan of Edessa. A Reassessment of the Evidence and a New Interpretation* (Piscataway, 2009).

<sup>151</sup> See T. Buchan, *Blessed Is He Who Has Brought Adam from Sheol* (Piscataway, 2004).



of Jerusalem, *Catech.* 14,19, describes Death and Hell as astonished because their subjects have been snatched from them, and shortly after Ephrem, John Chrysostom, *Hom.* 36,3 on the Gospel of Matthew PG 57,416, depicts the bronze gates of hell destroyed and trodden, and their locks removed. Like Origen, Ephrem considers Christ's action of emptying the *sheol* to be not only a historical action, but, qua situated in a sacred time and place, an eschatological action—in accord with the eschatological character of Ephrem's theology—: Christ's *descensus ad inferos* announces the final resurrection of all the dead<sup>152</sup> and will have its fulfilment in the end.<sup>153</sup>

Like Origen, Ephrem provides a spiritual interpretation of hell (Gehenna): its fire symbolises the torture of the sinners' conscience, their "inner judge," and the suffering of being far from God; the purpose of all this is the repentance and conversion of their soul (*Ep. ad Publ.* 22). Ephrem—like Origen—thinks that the eschatological Judgement will be based on each one's merits and demerits (*De Dom.* 1,2), and indeed he postulates punishments to different degrees in accord with the seriousness of each one's sins (*Ep. ad Publ.* 2–4). But, like Clement, Origen, and their followers, he admits that even those who will be in hell (Gehenna) will still be able to repent and convert, thanks to illumination and purification. Proportionally speaking, in the whole of his work Ephrem mentions hell and the Judgement very rarely, and mostly with expressions such as "perhaps," "maybe," and the like.<sup>154</sup> He speaks infinitely more of the final restoration of humanity, not only in a physical resurrection, which will involve absolutely all humans,<sup>155</sup> but also in a return to Paradise.

Moreover, Ephrem does not always distinguish clearly hell (Gehenna) and *sheol*,<sup>156</sup> and at the same time he repeatedly and clearly claims that Christ liberates absolutely all humans from *sheol*.<sup>157</sup> Thus, in reference to the parable of Dives and Lazarus—upon which Gregory of Nyssa com-

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<sup>152</sup> See *ibid.*, 307. Ephrem relied a great deal on Jewish and Jewish-Christian traditions, as is pointed out by N. Narinskaya, *Ephrem, a Jewish Sage* (Turnhout, 2010). On his rhetoric against "Jews" and "Arians" see C. Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy* (Washington, 2008) and Narinskaya, *Ephrem*.

<sup>153</sup> This is well illustrated by S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye* (Rome, 1985), 29–30.

<sup>154</sup> See J. Martikainen, *Das Böse und der Teufel in der Theologie Ephraems des Syrers* (Åbo, 1978); S.J. Beggiani, *Early Syriac Christianity with Special Reference to the Maronite Tradition* (Lanham, 1983), 133–137; T.B. Mansour, *La pensée symbolique de Saint Ephrem le Syrien*, XVI (Kaslik, 1988), 491–526.

<sup>155</sup> See Buchan, *Blessed*, 309–311.

<sup>156</sup> This is rightly noticed by Buchan, *Blessed*, 320.

<sup>157</sup> See P.J.J. Botha, "The Theology of Totality," in *Studia Patristica* XXV (1993) 223–228, on Ephrem's use of "all."

mented in his *De anima et resurrectione*, harmonising it with the doctrine of apokatastasis—Ephrem sometimes places Dives in Gehenna (*Hymn. de Par.* 1,17), sometimes in *sheol* (*Ep. ad Publ.* 4). He thinks that those who will be found in hell (Gehenna) for sure will be death (*sheol* itself), Satan, and sin; these will be imprisoned there at the Judgement and will definitely lose their power (*Carm. Nis.* 56,23). In *Carm. Nis.* 68,3 Satan, who is imprisoned in Gehenna, wishes that humanity were there with him, in order to torture it, but this is obviously not the case; Death warns him that he will rather be tortured by the human beings who were induced to sin by him (*Carm. Nis.* 59,11–18). Likewise, in *Carm. Nis.* 37,7–8, Ephrem states that Death alone will be tortured, while human beings will be allowed to abandon *sheol*.

Ephrem considers hell-Gehenna a place of purification where sinners can repent and obtain mercy:<sup>158</sup>

Blessed is the sinner who there [sc. in Gehenna] has received *mercy* and is deemed *worthy of having access to the area of Paradise!* Even if one was formerly out of the latter, one *can get to graze there by grace* [...] Between the fire of hell and Paradise, those who have found mercy can obtain *punishment and then forgiveness*. Glory to the Right One who reigns with his grace; He is the Good One who never puts limits to his goodness; in his compassion he bends toward the wicked; his divine cloud spreads *over all that belongs to Him*. He has *dew rain even onto the fire of punishment* ... (*Hymn. de Par.* 10,14–15)

Ephrem seems to go even further in *Comm. in Diat.* 10,4:<sup>159</sup>

Our Lord has freely forgiven many persons for their sins [...] but of the most serious sin [cf. Matt 12:32] *retribution in Gehenna* will be demanded [...] *no sin will resist repentance*, apart from this. *But not even this sin will be able to prevent a person from being justified*. God, *after giving retribution in Gehenna, will reward this person in the Kingdom*.

This passage comes really close to the doctrine of apokatastasis, of course provided that Ephrem assumed that people will really repent in Gehenna. Indeed, he seems to have assumed so. One cannot repent before the resurrection, in *sheol* (*Carm. Nis.* 3,16), but everyone can after the resurrection, in Gehenna (*Comm. in Diat.* 8,10). For in Gehenna all human beings keep their free will, which is a gift from God, and will thus be able to repent. This

<sup>158</sup> See S.P. Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian. Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood, 1990), 56–57.

<sup>159</sup> Edition: C. Mc Carthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron* (Oxford, 1993); C. Lange (tr.), *Ephraem der Syrer: Kommentar zum Diatessaron I–II* (Turnhout, 2008), with my review in *Exemplaria Classica* 14 (2010) 411–415. Lange ascribes this commentary, in its substance, to Ephrem. See also C. Lange, *The Portrayal of Christ in the Syriac Commentary on the Diatessaron* (Leuven, 2005).

is why Ephrem foresees that in the end Gehenna will become empty. For God is merciful always, and will liberate from Gehenna all those who repent. Like Origen, Ephrem insists that this will be an effect of God's grace (*Carm. Nis.* 37,9–10). This is what Death—as a dramatic *persona*—says addressing Satan:

It is likely that, thanks to (divine) mercy, *Gehenna will be emptied*,  
and you will remain there alone, along with your servants.  
(*Carm. Nis.* 59,8–9)

The importance of mercy—which can hardly be overestimated, also in the light of Ephrem's feminine characteristics applied to God<sup>160</sup>—is stressed again in *Hymn. de Par.* 5,12–14, in which Ephrem observes that there are some humans who are rewarded with Paradise because they have deserved it, while others do not deserve it, but will receive it by grace:

How blessed is the person who is deemed worthy of receiving it [sc. Paradise]!  
if not by right, at least by grace; if not by virtue of her good deeds, at least  
thanks to mercy.

Ephrem even implies that among the damned, to the left of God, there will remain only Satan and his demons, who will be spectators of Christ's triumph. Sinners will rise up against Satan and his demons, and will denounce them before God. Sin admits defeat and the devil acknowledges that Christ has taken his preys away from him; therefore, he is forced to cease his activity, since Christ has created all humans anew:

The Voice proclaimed, and they gathered. And the hosts of the Enemy came together with his servants [...] and they saw that *Jesus had triumphed*, to the dismay of all of them, who were *located to the left*. For there is *none of all the human beings who had not been tortured*. They began to report thoroughly, one by one, *all that which they had suffered*. Sin and *sheol* were scared, Death shook, and the dead rebelled, and Satan also trembled, because *sinner revolted against him*. Glory to you, because the evil one saw you and was tortured. Sin cried; he advised his sons, that is, demons and devils, and said to them: "Legion, the head of your hosts, is no more; the sea has swallowed him and his band. And the same will happen to you, my sons; if you despise this Jesus, here, he will destroy you" [...] The evil one said concerning our Saviour: "This one is greater than all the wicked [...] He has *robbed us*" [...] *The evil one stopped his activity* and Sin said: "It is necessary, therefore, to *stop and change from what I was*, because this son of Mary, here, who comes, *creates in humanity a new creation*."  
(*Carm. Nis.* 35,1–5)

<sup>160</sup> K. McVey, "Ephrem the Syrian's Use of Female Metaphors to Describe the Deity," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 5 (2001) 261–288.

The “sons of sin,” that is, those who belong to sin, are here identified, not with human beings, but with demons. Christ has robbed them in that he has taken humanity away from them. Human beings are represented as tormented by Satan for a long time, but as finally revolting against his dominion. The left side is here populated with the “host of the Enemy and his servants.” But humanity is said to reject Satan and sin. That the “left side” will eventually be empty, at least of human beings, seems to be suggested by Ephrem in *Hymn. de Nat.* 3. In this hymn he celebrates Christ’s inhumanation<sup>161</sup> as the fruit of divine mercy, which had him visit human illness as *Christus Medicus*; moreover, Ephrem reflects again on Christ’s victory, not only over death, but also over evil and the devil: Christ has “killed Death by means of his own death” (3,18). Christ is praised because his good actions have emptied hell:

Blessed is the one whose benefits have *left empty the left side!* [srqwh l-sml’]

The left side is that of the damned; the Syriac verb *srq* (ܣܪܩ) is the same used by Ephrem to indicate the total emptying of *sheol*, but here it refers to the side of those who are damned to hell.<sup>162</sup> As an alternative, one could interpret: “Blessed is the one whose benefits have left annihilated the left side!” In this case, one should interpret that “the left side” is populated, not by humans, but by demons. In either case, Ephrem celebrates the complete eviction of the powers of evil. Soon after, indeed (*ibid.* 3,19), the defeat is proclaimed not only of death (which could be interpreted merely at the physical level, as defeated at the eventual resurrection),<sup>163</sup> but also of evil and the devil:

Glory to God, the *Healer of humanity!* [...] He has *plunged our evil into the depths* and has *suffocated the one who suffocated us* [sc. the devil].<sup>164</sup> Let us glorify with all our mouths the Lord of *all the ways of salvation* [l-mr’ d-kl pwrsyn]!

<sup>161</sup> On this and the others *Hymni de Nativitate* see: *Éphrem de Nisibe, Hymnes sur la nativité*, intr. F. Graffin; tr. & comm. F. Cassingena-Trévedy, Sources chrétiennes 459 (Paris, 2001), based on the critical edition by E. Beck, CSCO 248 Syri 108 (Louvain, 1964); B. Hindo–C. Saleh, *Chants pour la Nativité, de saint Ephrem le Syrien* (Paris, 1996).

<sup>162</sup> E.g., see L. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Winona Lake, 1998 reprint, original ed. 1903), s.v. ܣܪܩ *srq*; now M. Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon. A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann’s Lexicon Syriacum* (Piscataway–Winona Lake, 2009), s.v. ܣܪܩ. It is the same verb that in Gen 42:35 is used in the sentence, “they *emptied* their sacks.”

<sup>163</sup> The defeat of death is also announced in *De Dom.* 3 and *Hymn. de Nat.* 26,9.

<sup>164</sup> On Ephrem’s protology see at least P. Féghali, *Les origines du monde et de l’homme dans l’œuvre de saint Éphrem* (Paris, 1997).

Ephrem focuses especially on humanity's return to Paradise:<sup>165</sup> not only its physical resurrection, but also its *spiritual* salvation, which corresponds to God's original plan for humanity. By defeating sin, Christ has restored all sinners (*Hymn. de virg.* 30,11–12), not only providing liberation from *sheol*, that is, from physical death, but also opening up a path to salvation, to Paradise (*Hymn. de Nat.* 8,4). Adam, who represents all humanity, is said not only to be resurrected, but also to enjoy Paradise (*Hymn. de Par.* 9,3–6). In a narrative form, in *Hymn. de Par.* 8, Ephrem expresses the same ideas:

The Lord of Adam came to look for him; entered *sheol*, found him, and brought him out in order to place him into Paradise [...] Blessed is the one who *has extracted Adam from sheol* and has *put him again into Paradise*, together with “the many.”

Christ's work is here presented in the form of his *descensus ad inferos* aimed at the liberation of Adam and other sinners from death. Again, Adam is not only said to be resurrected bodily by Christ, but also to have been placed in Paradise: Adam washed himself in the water and blood that gushed out from the side of Christ “and began to live again and returned into Paradise” (*Carm. Nis.* 39,7). Of course, the return to Paradise has as its condition a purification of the transgression (“being washed”) made possible by Christ. The return of Adam to Paradise is also mentioned in *Hymn. adv. Iul., De ecclesia*, 8.

The expulsion of the protoplasts from Paradise, which coincides with the introduction of physical death, is interpreted by Ephrem as a sign of God's mercy, in that God wanted to make their punishment only “temporal,” “limited in time,” which obviously means “not eternal” (*Comm. in Gen.* 3:25, 35,1–3). Physical death was introduced by God in his mercy, in order to limit the human beings' suffering in the present, decayed and ill condition in this world. A similar notion will appear again in John of Dalyatha, who seems to have supported the doctrine of apokatastasis:<sup>166</sup> to put a limit to one's earthly life by means of physical death implies putting a limit to each one's sins; as a consequence, punishment for these sins, too, will be limited. This is the same notion of physical death as decided by God's mercy in order to avoid human beings' eternal death that is found in Origen, Methodius, and Gregory of Nyssa, all of them supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>165</sup> On his conception of Paradise see A.N. Palmer, “Paradise Restored,” *L'Orient Chrétien* 87 (2003) 1–46.

<sup>166</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on John of Dalyatha.

<sup>167</sup> See here the sections devoted to Origen, Methodius, and Gregory, and my “Death” in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico*, English edition, ed. A. Di Berardino, forthcoming in Chicago from InterVarsity.

Ephrem too, like Origen—who based himself on Paul (Romans and 1 Corinthians)—, saw a close correspondence between Christ and Adam, as is clear especially from *Hymn. de Par.* 12. Both Adam and Christ represent the whole of humanity: respectively sinful humanity and redeemed humanity. The cosmic import of Christ's salvific work is clear from *Hymn. de Nat.* 26,4: the salvation brought about by Christ extends up to the whole universe.

Spiritual death, in the other world, is not inflicted by God, but "is freely chosen" by sinners (*Carm. Nis.* 43,15–16), but even so, Ephrem hopes that God's mercy will prevail over justice (*ibid.* 38,11). He always leaves the door open for repentance, which continues to be possible, thanks to the permanence of free will and God's grace.<sup>168</sup> This is clearly the same position as Origen's.

Christ, as Ephrem repeats again and again, has achieved the defeat, not only of death, but also of the devil and sin. Death is called a counsellor and a relative of Satan's (*Carm. Nis.* 41,15). For death entered the world as the consequence of sin, which in turn was a consequence of the deception of the devil.<sup>169</sup> This is clear, for instance, in the refrain of *Carm. Nis.* 59: "Glory to you, from your flock, because by you both death and *Satan have been defeated*," and in *Carm. Nis.* 61: "Glory to the one who, alone, *defeated the evil one*, and let him be acknowledged, *who has defeated death*." In the refrain of *Carm. Nis.* 58, Ephrem celebrates Christ's salvific work: "Glory to you, who have *defeated the evil one*, and, through your resurrection, have similarly triumphed over death." Once again, Christ is declared to have defeated not only death, but also the devil. This same idea appears again in *Hymn. de virg.* 12,30 (Christ "fought against death in order to conquer Satan and death") and in the last strophe of *Carm. Nis.* 36: "for the evil spirits and the demons he is a reason for discomfort; for Satan and death a reason for grief."

The Victorious one descended, not to be conquered by Satan, but to conquer and defeat him [...] He has defeated "the strong one" [...] He defeated Satan in the desert, while the latter was tempting him [...] When he was killed, he killed him, that in his own defeat he could defeat him [...] The Conqueror *conquered the evil one*; he came to conquer Death as well. In two symbols he conquered two enemies on two fronts: he *defeated Satan* on the high mountain, and *destroyed his pride*, which had destroyed Adam, and in the depths [sc. of the earth] he conquered death, which had buried Eve into *sheol*.<sup>170</sup>

(*Hymn. de azym.* 1,11–13)

<sup>168</sup> See also Buchan, *Blessed*, 288.

<sup>169</sup> See Ramelli, "La colpa antecedente come ermeneutica del male," 11–64.

<sup>170</sup> On Ephrem's *Hymni de azymis* see now J.E. Walters, *Hymns on the Unleavened Bread, by Ephrem the Syrian* (Piscataway, 2011).

In all of these passages Ephrem is clear in claiming that Christ's victory has been achieved not only over death, but also over evil and Satan. In *Hymn. de azym.* 4,1–19 he goes even further and, in a series of parallels, affirms that Christ's victory over Satan is as universal and definite as that over death:

Our Lord has denounced *sin and sheol*: likewise *he has condemned* Satan and death [...] While Christ has defeated death overtly, *Satan has been defeated in an invisible way* [...] Even if he was dead, Christ prevailed in the end: on that Friday on which he was killed, he gave *life back to all*. When *people repented*, Satan was covered with shame; on that Friday on which he died, Christ *made all his own*.

Christ takes all people away from the power of sin and has them repent and convert; this is the sense in which he defeats Satan and makes all people his own. Ephrem goes on as follows:

The Passover lamb conquered only Egypt; the true Lamb *conquered sin and sheol*. In *sheol* he clearly defeated sin, that both those defeated by him might have to reproach one another [...] Because of the true Lamb, the evil one cried out in despair, because *Adam, the head of all sinners, has been made just*.

Adam, who represents all sinners, is not only resurrected, but also “made just,” and therefore purified from his sin. This passage should be read in parallel with the above-cited *Carm. Nis.* 39,7. Ephrem summarises effectively:

[Christ] definitely *subjugated Satan and Death*, that they might shout to one another that One, and only One, has *conquered both of them* [...] Behold the double triumph of the true Lamb!

The triumph is “double” because, once again, it is a triumph not only over death, but also over evil and the devil. In *Hymn. de azym.* 3:

Egypt represented two joint symbols:<sup>171</sup> it was the mirror both of *sheol and of sin* [...] Thanks to the divine Lamb, the rapacious *sheol* rejected and returned what was opposite to its nature; thanks to the true Lamb, *the sin that devours rejected and set free those who had been resurrected* [...]. Thanks to the true Lamb, *Satan returned the peoples*, after keeping them prisoners just as Pharaoh had done. Pharaoh represented two joint symbols: he was the type both of Satan and of death. Thanks to the true Lamb, *Satan, who had blocked the access, had to restore the path of the truth*.

Those who will be resurrected are all humans; these are said to be liberated from evil as well. Evil, sin, is that with which the devil had oppressed human

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<sup>171</sup> Ephrem's allegorical interpretation, besides being a point of contact with Origen, also resonates with a characteristic of Ephrem's own thought: see K. Den Biesen, *Simple and Bold. Ephrem's Art of Symbolic Thought* (Piscataway, NJ, 2006).

beings (*Carm. Nis.* 41,1–9). The final motif, of the restoration of the access to Paradise, is particularly dear to Ephrem. For instance, in the refrain of *Hymn. de Par.* 2 Ephrem sings: “Blessed is the One who was pierced and thus removed the sword from the entrance to Paradise.” In *Hymn. de cruc.* 9,2 Ephrem repeats the concept in a parallel: “The sword that pierced Christ removed the sword that guarded the entrance to Paradise; his forgiveness destroyed the document of our debt.” This refers to the removal of sin, not merely of physical death. The same imagery is used by Ephrem in *Hymn. de Nat.* 8,4: “Blessed is the Merciful One who saw the sword near Paradise, which impeded the access to the Tree of Life. He came and took a body that was wounded, so that, through the opening up of his side, he could open up the way to Paradise.”<sup>172</sup>

*Carm. Nis.* 52 entirely revolves around a dialogue between Satan and Death (several other dialogues between these two characters are included in the last *Carmina Nisibena*<sup>173</sup>); its refrain focuses on a theme—Christ liberates humanity from both death and evil—that is particularly dear to Ephrem, as I have shown: “Glory to you, o Son of the Shepherd of all, who liberated his flock from the wolves that, sitting in ambush, devoured it: *the evil one and death*.” Satan is not physical death, but the one who takes possession of human beings’ free will (he says: “How great I am! I can capture one’s free will, the sovereign power!”). But repentance always allows one to escape from the kingdom of Satan:

- [Death:] This delight of yours is transformed into bitterness; *the repentance of the soul* enters even among your cravings.  
 [Satan:] *Sheol* is hated because in it there is no repentance; it is an abyss that swallows and precludes every movement.  
 [Death:] *Sheol* is a hole and those who fall into it will emerge again from it, but *sin* is hated because it cuts off the human being’s hope.  
 [Satan:] Even if I do not love repentances, *I always leave room for repentance*.

In Satan’s kingdom, which is hell (Gehenna), repentance is possible, which obviously entails a liberation from that kingdom.<sup>174</sup>

If Ephrem can foresee that Gehenna in the end will remain empty, it is also on the basis of his *Christus-Medicus* theology,<sup>175</sup> which in Clement and

<sup>172</sup> See Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 81–85.

<sup>173</sup> See D. Cerbelaud, *La descente aux enfers. Carmina Nisibena* (Bégrolles-en-Mauges, 2009).

<sup>174</sup> See also *Carm. Nis.* 36,18.

<sup>175</sup> A. Shemunkasho, *Healing in the Theology of St. Ephrem* (Piscataway, 2004), 293–379 and 381–419 on Christ as Physician.



Origen as well is one of the factors that make the eventual apokatastasis possible. The fall introduced an illness, that of sin, to remove which God sent Christ as a “medication of life.”<sup>176</sup> Christ heals the “deadly wound” or “sores” produced by the “enemy of humanity,” the “serpent,” through sin.<sup>177</sup> Christ guarantees a full “healing” (‘sywt’: *Comm. in Diat.* 12,24; 13,6; 16,15,31; *De Dom.* 13–14; *Hymn. c. haer.* 38,13; 43,9;<sup>178</sup> *Hymn. de Nat.* 1,28) and “restoration” (*hlymw’t*: *Hymn. de virg.* 50,25), which renders ἀποκατάστασις. One of the basic meanings of this term is that of restoration in a therapeutic sense: restoration to health and integrity. This restoration will be completed in the end, when the human being, free from sin, will be able to put up again his “dress of light,” which reminds one of the spiritual, luminous body that Origen postulated for the resurrection.<sup>179</sup>

The healing of the whole world, a healing from sin, will be a new creation (*Hymn. c. haer.* 43,9); Christ is “the healer of *all* [kl].”<sup>180</sup> He can heal all through his “mercy” and “compassion,”<sup>181</sup> his “goodness,”<sup>182</sup> “piety” (*Eccl.* 31,1), “solicit care,”<sup>183</sup> and “love.”<sup>184</sup> For, “the Lord’s providence has *healed the human being entirely, in all* [l-brnš’ l-kl’ b-kl mdm]” (*Carm. Nis.* 46,8; 2,2; 4,7); Christ “descended in order to heal those who had immersed themselves in all kinds of evil” (*De Dom.* 42). The work of Christ as a Physician is “to fill every lack” (*De Dom.* 2,12); he “has brought to fulness what was lacking in the creature,” that is, in humanity (*Comm. in Diat.* 16,28). It is notable that the same idea had been expressed by Bardaisan at the end of the Syriac *Liber Legum Regionum*: “all the lacks will be filled.”<sup>185</sup> This is, indeed, one of the points that constitute the description of the eventual apokatastasis, a description that Ephrem surely knew—and, as I have remarked, never criticised. On the contrary, he might even have echoed it, at least in this respect.

<sup>176</sup> E.g. *Hymn. de virg.* 31,13; *Comm. in Diat.* 10,7; *Carm. Nis.* 21,18; *De Dom.* 3,15,42,44; Shemunkasho, *Healing*, 381ff.

<sup>177</sup> *Carm. Nis.* 74,14; *Hymn. c. haer.* 33,1.

<sup>178</sup> Ed. E. Beck, *Ephraem des Syriers Hymnen contra Haereses*, CSCO 169–170, Syri 76–77 (Louvain 1957).

<sup>179</sup> *Comm. in Diat.* 16, 10 etc. See Shemunkasho, *Healing*, 407–421, and I. Ramelli, “La veste di luce nella mistica siriana,” in G. Lettieri–C. Noce–I. Ramelli, *Prospettive cristiane*, I, Quaderni del Vestire 3 (Rome, 2007), Ch. 3.

<sup>180</sup> *Carm. Nis.* 4,16,20; 34,5; *De fide* 12,9; 15,7; *Eccl.* 28,16; 31,1.

<sup>181</sup> *Hymn. de virg.* 26,10; *Comm. in Diat.* 13,1.

<sup>182</sup> *Carm. Nis.* 2, 2; *Hymn. c. haer.* 51,1 etc.

<sup>183</sup> *Carm. Nis.* 46, 8; *Comm. in Diat.* 16, 24.

<sup>184</sup> *Hymn. c. haer.* 1,1,8; 21,11; 39,6 etc.

<sup>185</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section on Bardaisan.

Christ, by assuming the human body, has healed and restored it, bringing it back to its original nature (*Hymn. c. haer.* 20,4); what is more, Christ has healed the human being's intellect (*tr'yt'*, *ibid.* 11,2) and free will (*h'rwt'*, *ibid.* 11, 1; 28, 5; 39, 6; 51, 2 etc.) and the consequences of their wrong choices, that is, vices and sins (*Hymn. c. haer.* 51,2). This also paves the way for the eventual restoration.

Christ the Physician manifests his healing capacity with his birth as a human being, which is salvific per se: "Blessed is the Physician who has descended and amputated without generating pains, has *healed the wounds* with gentle medication! His birth was the medication that has mercy upon sinners" (*Hymn. de Nat.* 3,20). The whole of this Hymn proclaims the annihilation of the "malediction," of "death," of "our prisoner," of "our iniquity," clearly not only physical death, but also sin. Ephrem applies again the theme of Christ-Physician to the Incarnation in *Hymn. de fide* 19: Christ, who is God, took up humanity and offered himself as a medication.<sup>186</sup> Thanks to the spiritual healing operated by Jesus, "deadly sin has been condemned to death" (*De Dom.* 21). Jesus is said to have killed "our enemy" (*Hymn. de Nat.* 18,27), Satan (*Hymn. de virg.* 14,11–13; *Hymn. de fide* 38,7): Christ "thaws the ice of death from our souls," clearly—since he speaks of souls—the ice of *spiritual* death (*Hymn. de virg.* 26,6).

Some of the themes I have highlighted in Ephrem will return afterwards in another Syriac Father, Jacob of Sarug (451–521), who is worth at least mentioning in the present research especially on account of his Homilies on the resurrection. These are part of Jacob's very wide production of metrical homilies: 760 are reported, about half of which survive. In particular in the *Homily on the Resurrection of the Lord* (*Hom.* 55 Bedjan)<sup>187</sup> Jacob, like Ephrem, highlights that Christ conquered hell and drew Adam out, and, like Ephrem, emphasises Christ's victory, not only over death, but also over sin and evil. Christ "uprooted Sheol" (v. 6) and "descended and drew out Adam who had sunk down into the depth of Sheol; that superb image came out from

<sup>186</sup> On the *Hymni de fide* see A. Palmer, *Words, Silences, and the Silent Word*, in *Melito d-Madnho. Parole de l'Orient* 20 (1995) 129–200, and P.S. Russell, "Ephraem and Athanasius on the Knowledge of Christ: two anti-Arian Treatments of Mark 13:32," *Gregorianum* 85 (2004) 445–474 on Ephrem's *Hymn. de fide* 77–79 and Athanasius's three *Orations Against the Arians*.

<sup>187</sup> *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*, ed. P. Bedjan, vol. 2 (Paris–Leipzig, 1905; reprint Piscataway, 2006), 624–635. I cite the translation by Th. Kollaparampil, *Jacob of Serug's Homilies on the Resurrection* (Piscataway, 2008) with slight modifications and the insertion of Syriac key words.

corruption with its Lord" (vv. 57–58).<sup>188</sup> Not only did Christ "release from it the prisoners who were wasting away in the house of darkness" (v. 10), but has also made "perdition succumb" (v. 10). The universality of the victory of Christ over sin is stressed many times. Christ "carried the iniquity of the world" (v. 72 = v. 101; cf. 111: he "carried the iniquity of the earth"; v. 114: he has "consumed the iniquity of the world"; v. 161: he "carried the sin of the earth"). He carried "the disordered sins of all the peoples [ܠܗܡܐ ܠܗܡܐ]" (v. 73), "all the [ܠܗܡܐ] debts of all the peoples [ܠܗܡܐ ܠܗܡܐ] in all places [ܠܗܡܐ ܠܗܡܐ]" (v. 103), "the whole [ܠܗܡܐ] iniquity of the whole world [ܠܗܡܐ ܠܗܡܐ] in every region [ܠܗܡܐ ܠܗܡܐ]" (v. 104), "the iniquity of all" (v. 118). Christ has defeated, not only death, but also sin: "He bound sin" and "put it to death," he "killed it" (v. 119); he "killed iniquity, bound sin, and trod upon death" (v. 137). "Iniquity died in him" and when he rose "iniquity did not rise up" (v. 108). This is the soteriological principle that Origen and Gregory of Nyssa put forward: humanity can be saved, and only in Christ, because only in Christ is there a human being that is without sin. Also, the universality and eternity of the salvific effects of the death of Christ, which occurred only once, is remarked by Jacob just as it was by Origen: "*For all generations* the Redeemer died for three days" (v. 117). The result of Christ's carrying the sins of all is the liberation of all from sin: he "carried off the iniquity of all by his death *and liberated them*" (v. 118). For he not only carried, but also cancelled, the sin of all: "The might of Jesus was able to *take away* the iniquity of the *whole world* [ܠܗܡܐ ܠܗܡܐ]" (v. 134). Sin was related to the fall, and Christ's action has taken away the consequence of the fall: "He knelt down for the sacrifice, so that the world might *rise from the fall*" (v. 191). Christ delivers all people not only from death, but, thanks to their purification from sins, also from perdition: he "liberates us from perdition," which is the effect of sin (v. 193). The action performed by Christ is described in terms of the restoration of all people who were in exile and prisoners, precisely one of the main meanings of ἀποκατάστασις. Christ "*restored* the captives of all peoples [ܠܗܡܐ ܠܗܡܐ] who had been deported [...] he *restored* them [sc. Adam and Eve] to the house of the kingdom" (vv. 196, 200). The verb is in both occurrences ܠܗܡܐ, which means precisely "to restore," "to return," and corresponds to ἀποκαθίστημι in Greek.

It is also interesting to note that some of the soteriological motifs I have pointed out in Ephrem return in the *Cave of Treasures*, a Syriac work

<sup>188</sup> Cf. vv. 145–146: "The Swimmer descended to the abyss of the dead and raised from it that superb image which was corrupted while He was indeed not corrupted."

first published by Giuseppe Simone Assemani which, not by accident, is attributed to Ephrem, even though its present redaction seems to stem from the sixth century or after. It might stem from a follower of Ephrem's. It recounts the history of the world from the creation of Adam to the earthly life of Jesus Christ. In its last part, dealing with Christ, a long and detailed series of comparisons between Adam (and Eve) and Christ is brought forward. Among these comparisons some have great soteriological import:

On Friday Adam and Eve sinned, and on Friday *their sin was remitted*.

On Friday Adam and Eve died, and on Friday they came alive.

On Friday Death reigned over them, and on Friday they were freed from its dominion.

[...] On Friday Adam and Eve became naked, and on Friday Christ stripped Himself naked and clothed them.

On Friday Satan stripped Adam and Eve naked, and on Friday *Christ stripped naked Satan and all his hosts*, and put them to shame openly.

On Friday the door of Paradise was shut and Adam went forth, and on Friday *it was opened* and a robber went in.

On Friday the two-edged sword was given to the Cherub, and on Friday Christ smote with the spear and broke the two-edged sword.

[...] At the ninth hour Adam went down into the lowest depth of the earth from the height of Paradise, and at the ninth hour Christ went down to the lowest depths of the earth, to those who lay in the dust, from the height of the Cross.

[...] And when the Wood (i.e. the Cross) was fixed upon it, and Christ was smitten with the spear, and blood and water flowed down from His side, they ran down into the mouth of Adam and became a baptism to him, and *he was baptised*. [...] blood and water flowed down from His side [...], that through the blood life might be given unto Adam, and then, after life and resurrection, the water for his baptism. [...] The blood and the water ran down into the mouth of Adam, and *Adam was redeemed, and put on a garment of glory*.

The sin of Adam and Eve is remitted by Christ; the effects of their sin are undone by Christ. Like Ephrem, the *Cave of Treasures* highlights the victory of Christ not only over death, but also over Satan and sin. Christ's *descensus ad inferos* is emphasised, with its salvific import, as well as the baptism of Adam at the death of Christ, a baptism which was felt as indispensable for Adam's salvation and glorification.

Now the descent to Sheol was not in vain, for it was the cause of manifold benefits to our race. He dismissed Death from his domination. He preached

the resurrection to those who were lying in the dust, and He *forgave those who had sinned* against the Law. He laid waste Sheol, and *slew sin*. He *put Satan to shame*, and made the demons sad.<sup>189</sup>

The theme of Christ's victory over the devil and the universally salvific import of his *descensus ad inferos* interestingly returns in the Ethiopian liturgy, which underwent heavy Syriac influence. In the so-called *Doctrine of Arcane Things*,<sup>190</sup> Christ is said to have defeated Satan and to bring all of those who are damned into his Kingdom: with his cross, "he broke the chains of death, thanks to which the devil had long ago subjugated us; for this reason, thanks to his passion, he has shown us the ruin of the devil, destroying the power of his poison, he has lacerated his net. And the devil, whose face is entirely enveloped in darkness, was scared and astonished when he saw the Only-Begotten, the incarnated God, down in hell." Death and hell declare that Christ "lifts up toward heaven *all the souls* that have been given" to them. In reference to the Judgement, for Christ "the left side has become the right." And in the Eucharistic Hymn it is declared that "only God is merciful and right" at the same time.

### *The Cappadocian Fathers: Basil*

Sozomen in *HE* 6,17 states that Basil and Gregory Nazianzen "relied to the utmost extent [ἐπηρείδοντο μάλιστα] on Origen's teachings," even in the matter of allegory. Sozomen is in fact following Socrates' drift. Socrates, who was an Origenian himself, as I have shown,<sup>191</sup> in *HE* 4,26 speaks at length of Basil and Nazianzen's predilection for Origen. Socrates mentions their common training in rhetoric, under Libanius's guidance,<sup>192</sup> and then in philosophy, in Antioch (ἀψάμενοι οὖν φιλοσόφων λόγων παρὰ τῷ ἐν τῇ Ἀντιοχείᾳ συμπράττοντι τὰ φιλόσοφα). Shortly after their approach to philosophy, they began to collect and read Origen's work (μετ' οὐ πολὺ τὰ Ὠριγένους βιβλία συνάγοντες), and they took over from him the exegetical method of Scripture, that is, allegorical exegesis: ἐξ αὐτῶν τὴν ἐρμηνείαν τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων ἐπέγνωσαν. Socrates remarks that at that time Origen enjoyed "a great fame" (μέγα γὰρ κλέος τὸ Ὠριγένους καθ' ὅλης τότε τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐφήπλωτο).

<sup>189</sup> Tr. E.A. Wallis Budge with some changes.

<sup>190</sup> On which see at least O. Raineri, "La Dottrina degli Arcani (*Temherta hebu'at*) del Messale etiopico vaticano," *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 95,6 (1981) 550–555.

<sup>191</sup> See above, Ch. 2, section devoted to Origen's first opponents.

<sup>192</sup> See H.-G. Nesselrath, "Libanio e Basilio di Cesarea: un dialogo interreligioso?" *Adamantius* 16 (2010) 338–352.

Our historian highlights that it was their intense study of Origen's work that allowed Basil and Nazianzen to fight "Arianism": Ὡν ἀσκηθέντες δυνάτῳς ἀπήντων πρὸς τοὺς ἀρειανίζοντας. The heritage of Origen was being the object of controversy at that time; the "Arians" adduced passages from Origen in support of their doctrines, but Basil and Nazianzen argued that they entirely misunderstood Origen's writings, since these supported squarely the opposite—namely the Nicene<sup>193</sup>—doctrine: καίτοι τῶν Ἀρειανῶν τὰ Ὀριγένους βιβλία εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ὡς ᾤοντο, τοῦ ἰδίου καλοῦντων δόγματος, αὐτοὶ ἐξηλεγχον, καὶ ἐδείκνυνον μὴ νοήσαντας τὴν Ὀριγένους σύνεσιν. Basil's being influenced by Eusebius—who was no "Arian" but subscribed to the Nicene creed, perhaps even determining its shaping—further confirms Basil's allegiance to the line of Origen.<sup>194</sup> Basil was also strongly influenced by Athanasius,<sup>195</sup> who in turn had absorbed much of Origen's ideas.

Both Basil and Gregory Nazianzen were indeed estimators of Origen, perhaps no less than Gregory of Nyssa was, and at any rate they knew his work well. They very probably even collected long excerpts from his works in the *Philocalia*,<sup>196</sup> in 27 chapters, according to the model set by Pamphilus. The works excerpted are not only exegetical works, such as commentaries and homilies, but also a letter to Gregory Thaumaturgus, the *Contra Celsum*, and Origen's often misunderstood philosophical masterpiece, *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*. Nazianzen in his letter (*Ep.* 115) to Theodore, which precedes the *Philocalia*, does not say explicitly that this work was written by himself and Basil; what the letter says is that it is a ὑπόμνημα of Gregory and Basil for the use of those who study the Bible, the φιλόλογοι, literally those who love the Logos (or the Word).<sup>197</sup> The attribution to Basil and Nazianzen is found in the anonymous

<sup>193</sup> That this is indeed basically the case is demonstrated by I. Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism," 21–49. On Basil's Trinitarian theology see at least S.M. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth* (Washington, DC, 2007).

<sup>194</sup> On Eusebius's influence on Basil see M. DelCogliano, "Basil of Caesarea on Proverbs 8:22 and the Sources of Pro-Nicene Theology," *Journal of Theological Studies* 59 (2008) 183–190. This further proves that Eusebius should be regarded as a pro-Nicene rather than as a "semi-Arian," a designation that is contested by Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism." Edwards, *Catholicity*, 119 also counters the presentation of Eusebius as semi-Arian and remarks that expressions such as δεῦτερος Κύριος and δεῦτερος Θεός "do not connote inferiority, but a perfect communication to the Son of the Father's attributes."

<sup>195</sup> See, for instance, M. DelCogliano, "The Influence of Athanasius and the Homoiousians on Basil of Caesarea's Decentralization of 'Unbegotten,'" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19 (2011) 197–223.

<sup>196</sup> The title, however, is not that given by its authors, but it was chosen by modern scholars on the basis of the Slavic *Philocalia*.

<sup>197</sup> See E. Junod, "Remarques sur la composition de la *Philocalie* d'Origène par Basile de

prologue that follows the letter, probably posterior to the condemnation of Origenism in the fifth century. Both Chapter 1 of the *Philocalia*, which opens the section on Scriptural exegesis, and Chapter 21, which opens that on free will, are drawn from Origen's *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν* and are more important and emphasised than the others are from a doctrinal viewpoint. This is also why it is possible that the *Philocalia* was originally divided into two books or parts, the first embracing Chapters 1–20, on Biblical exegesis, and the second including Chapters 21–27, on free will. But these two parts are impossible to separate from one another, and even less from Origen's protology and eschatology, since it was precisely his concern for theodicy in his polemic against “Gnosticism,” and against Gnostic and Marcionite “deconstructions” of the Bible, that led him to create his theory of the *logika* and eschatology, as I have argued.<sup>198</sup> Of this, Rufinus was fully aware, and Basil and Gregory Nazianzen also were.<sup>199</sup>

It is not accidental that Chapter 6 of Book 2 of Origen's *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν* was attributed to Basil, under the title, *Sermo de incarnatione Domini*. Leo the Great also used this chapter, as he was convinced that it was by Basil. Basil ordained a reader Evagrius, a faithful Origenian, and inspired his thought, certainly also influencing him in his appreciation of Origen.<sup>200</sup>

It is also telling that Basil's main sources, besides Origen himself, are Origenians such as Eusebius and Didymus, as well as Athanasius and the Homoiousians, that Basil based himself more or less heavily on Origen's exegesis,<sup>201</sup> and that Evagrius's letter *On Faith* was ascribed to Basil as Letter 8 of

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Césarée et Grégoire de Nazianze,” *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 52 (1972) 149–156; *Origène, Philocalie, 1–20, sur les Écritures*, ed. M. Harl, and *La Lettre à Africanus sur l'Histoire de Suzanne*, ed. N. de Lange (Paris, 1983), particularly 20–24. It is very probable that the tradition according to which Basil and Nazianzen were the redactors of the *Philocalia* is reliable, even though doubts have been raised: see É. Junod, “Basile de Césarée et Grégoire de Nazianze sont-ils les compilateurs de la *Philocalie* d'Origène? Réexamen de la Lettre 115 de Grégoire,” in *Mémorial Dom Jean Gribomont* (Rome, 1988) 349–360, but in his previous works Junod too received the traditional attribution, until his introduction to *Origène: Philocalie 21–27, Sources Chrétiennes* 226 (Paris, 1976). Most scholars accept Basil's and Nazianzen's paternity of the *Philocalia*, e.g. M. Girardi, “Origene nel giudizio di Basilio di Cesarea,” in *Origeniana VIII*, 1071–1088, and W. Löhr, “Christianity as Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives of an Ancient Intellectual Project,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (2010) 160–188, *praes.* 185.

<sup>198</sup> In “La coerenza”; Eadem, “Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 102 (2009) 135–168.

<sup>199</sup> See Ramelli, “Origen, Patristic Philosophy.”

<sup>200</sup> See below in this same chapter, section on Evagrius.

<sup>201</sup> An example is Basil's homily *In sanctam Christi generationem*, where Basil continually relies on Origen more or less heavily. See M. DelCogliano, “Tradition and Polemic in Basil of Caesarea's Homily on the Theophany,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012) 30–55. For Eusebius's,

his. For this letter not only contains, as I shall indicate,<sup>202</sup> a thoroughly orthodox Nicene-Constantinopolitan Trinitarian theology, but also, in Chapter 7 § 25, refers to apokatastasis conceived in Origenian terms as an eventual return to unity.<sup>203</sup> Like Origen, and like Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius—under the name of Basil—in *Ep.* 8,7 ll. 52ff., links the apokatastasis with the final unity, joining two NT key-passages: Acts 1:6, where the very vocabulary of apokatastasis is found (*ἀποκαθιστανεῖς*), and Jesus's great prayer for unity in his farewell discourse in John 17, with a verbatim quotation of John 17:21–22, which was precisely Origen's favourite quotation in support of the view that the final restoration will be characterised by ineffable unity and concord. He also inserts a clear reference to another apokatastasis passage, 1 Cor 15:28, when he states that God will finally be in all. Furthermore, he refers the restoration and unity (*μονάς*, one of Evagrius's key concepts, but already present in Origen, and the passing away of number, another idea developed by Evagrius) to the acquisition of the knowledge of God. These are Evagrius's words, which were ascribed to Basil himself:

ἐρωτήσασι τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐν ταῖς Πράξεσι τῶν Ἀποστόλων τὸ “Πότε ἀποκαθιστανεῖς τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ Ἰσραήλ”; φησιν· “Οὐχ ὑμῶν ἐστι γινῶναι χρόνους ἢ καιροὺς οὓς ὁ Πατὴρ ἔθετο ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ.” [...] Χρόνους δὲ καὶ καιροὺς μὴ μοι αἰσθητοὺς, ἀλλὰ διαστήματά τινα γνώσεως ὑπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ ἡλίου γινόμενα. Δεῖ γὰρ τὴν προσευχὴν ἐκείνην ἐπὶ πέρας ἀχθῆναι τοῦ Δεσπότης ἡμῶν. Ἰησοῦς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ προσευξάμενος· “Δὸς αὐτοῖς ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν ᾧσι, καθὼς ἐγὼ καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐσμέν, Πάτερ.” Εἰς γὰρ ᾧν ὁ Θεός, ἐν ἐκάστῳ γινόμενος ἐνοὶ τοὺς πάντας καὶ ἀπόλλυται ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῇ τῆς μονάδος ἐπιδημίᾳ.

When, in the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples ask him, “When will you restore the Kingdom to Israel?,” Jesus replies: “It is not up to you to know the times and occasions that the Father has established in his own decisional power.” [...] Now, please, *do not interpret these “times and occasions” as sense perceptible, but, so to say, as intervals of knowledge* that come to existence thanks to the intellectual Sun [sc. God, the Good]. For *that famous prayer of Our Lord must be fulfilled*. It is Jesus, indeed, who prayed as follows: “Grant them that they, too, may be one in us, just as I and you are one, o Father.” For God, *being one, coming to be in each one, unifies all*, and thus the number perishes, thanks to the dwelling of the Monad [sc. God] in it.

One could not be clearer concerning apokatastasis. The final restoration will come when all have attained knowledge (an Origenian trait, typical of

Didymus's, and other Origenians' influence on Basil see the works by DelCogliano listed *ibid.* n. 4.

<sup>202</sup> See below in this same chapter, the section on Evagrius.

<sup>203</sup> See the volume on John 17 that shall be published in *Novum Testamentum Patristicum* and my “Unity” in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico*, ed. A. Di Berardino, English edition.



Evagrius). Then all will be in unity, because God will be “in all,” and God is the Monad (Basil is using Origen’s definition of God as “Monad and Henad” that will be taken over by Ps. Dionysius as well<sup>204</sup>). Evagrius disguised as Basil, too, like Origen, is convinced that apokatastasis is essentially a work of grace and depends on the Trinity: on the Father’s eternal decision or βουλή, on the Son’s incarnation and resurrection, and on the work of the Spirit.

It is not surprising, either, that Basil depended on Origen heavily for the notion of the last Judgment, punishments, and ultimate *telos*, and very literally for his concept and definition of time. The Judgment, according to Basil, will consist in the accusation of each one’s conscience (*Hom. in Ps.* 48,2); passions and sins are torments to themselves (*ibid.* 7,7); the blessed *telos* is the assimilation to God, which will be attainable thanks to enlightenment and knowledge (*De Spir. S.* 1,2). The veil will be removed from each one’s spiritual sight, which will return to being like that of angels (*Hom. in Ps.* 33, 11). In this condition it is difficult to imagine how some people will be able to still stick to evil. As for Basil’s definition of time, in *C. Eun.* 1,21 he describes time (χρόνος) as τὸ συμπαρεχτεινόμενον τῇ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα, the very same definition as given by Origen in *Comm. in Eph.* fr. 9.<sup>205</sup> Moreover, Basil’s use of terms related to the notion of eternity is revealing, in that it is very close to that of Origen and certainly compatible with an inclination to the doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>206</sup> Basil uses the adjectives αἰώνιος and ἄϊδιος much more often than either of the other Cappadocians does. The philosophical term, ἄϊδιος, occurs especially in Basil’s polemic against the “neo-Arian” Eunomius,<sup>207</sup> to affirm the absolute eternity of the Son. Indeed, Basil and Gregory Nyssen show very well how the debate against Arianism contributed to the formation of the terminology of eternity. Basil uses ἄϊδιος in reference to God or the Trinity and their attributes, or in reference to eternal and intelligible realities, and to the future life, which is specified in this respect as being strictly eternal.<sup>208</sup> The same is

<sup>204</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on Ps. Dionysius.

<sup>205</sup> P. Tzamalikos, *The Concept of Time in Origen* (Bern, 1991), 149–150, rightly notes Basil’s dependence on Origen. Concerning Origen’s influence on Basil’s doctrine of spiritual progress see M. Mira, “Influencia del prólogo del comentario origeniano *In Cantica* sobre la ascesis de Basilio,” in *Origeniana IX* (Leuven, 2009), 533–546.

<sup>206</sup> See the analysis by Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 184–185; 189–199.

<sup>207</sup> On which see now M. DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea’s Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names. Christian Theology and Late-Antique Philosophy in the Fourth Century Trinitarian Controversy*, VCS 103 (Leiden, 2010).

<sup>208</sup> *C. Eun.* 769,9; *De Spir. S.* 28,27.

the case with "eternal victory" in *Cons. ad aegr.* PG 31,1713,33: ἀἰδίδιος νίκη. In *Serm. in Hex.* 1,5 Basil ascribes both αἰώνιος and ἀἰδίδιος to angels, in a clear climax: the state that existed before the creation of the world (κόσμου), and is apt to the powers that are beyond the world (ταῖς ὑπερκοσμίαις δυνάμεσι), not only is beyond time in the present world (ὑπέρχρονος), but it even lasts through the aeons (αἰωνία), and is absolutely eternal (ἀἰδίδιος), that is, beyond all aeons. In *C. Eun.* 608,45, Basil observes that "some attribute to the aeons [αἰώνες], too, the name of 'eternal' [τοῦ ἀἰδίδιου]," thus showing that he was well aware of the precise semantic distinction between αἰώνιος and ἀἰδίδιος.

In his writings, the former is used in some biblical citations, for instance in the sense frequently encountered in the Septuagint of "remote, ancient" (so that, for example, he glosses the Biblical ὅρια αἰώνια with ὅρια πατέρων) or "enduring through generations," again in the contrasting couple πρόσκαιρα and αἰωνία; it occurs in the Septuagint quotation εἰς μηνμόσυνον αἰώνιον and in reference to God. Basil often uses the Gospels phrase ζωὴ αἰώνιος. In *Reg. brev.* PG 31,1120 Basil paraphrases Jesus's words that one who hates one's own ψυχή in this world (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ) will preserve it for life in the other world (εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον). In *De Bapt.* PG 31,1148, Basil, drawing on John, describes ζωὴ αἰώνιος as ζωὴ tout court, in that it is the true life, and is Christ. Opposed to this and similar positive ideas, such as αἰώνιος glory etc., which are also widely attested in Basil, is, among Basil's expressions, αἰσχύνη αἰώνιος, "shame in the other world," this too a quotation from the Bible, and αἰώνιος καταφθορά, "ruin / perdition in the next world," and, above all, πῦρ αἰώνιον, "otherworldly fire," another Biblical expression, in *Prol.* 7 PG 31,673, where Basil cites Jesus's words about people who have not done works of mercy and are sent to fire in the other world. Ibid. 8 PG 31,685, Basil paraphrases Scripture again, when he says that the just will go to ζωὴ αἰώνιος and the Kingdom of heavens, while sinners will be sent to κόλασις αἰώνιος, where the worm does not die and the fire cannot be put out; the same opposition, ζωὴ αἰώνιος vs. κόλασις αἰώνιος, is found again ibid. 892, in which punishment in the other world is exemplified by the σκότος αἰώνιον, "otherworldly darkness." Parallel is the phrase "αἰώνιος death," death in the world to come. That αἰώνιος in all of these cases refers to the world to come, according to the Biblical use, is clear from *Cons. ad aegr.* PG 31,1720, where it is stated that a rich man, if rich in virtue, will be rich also in the next world, but if deprived of virtue, he will be "poor in the world to come," πένης αἰώνιος. The same is also clear from *Or. in Lacisis* PG 31,1448,31: Basil glosses αἰωνία ζημία, as opposed to αἰωνία ἐλπὶς, with τὴν ἐπερχομένην ζημίαν, thus equating αἰώνιος punishment and punishment in the future world. Likewise, in *Hom.*

*exh. Bapt.* PG 31, 436,11, Basil contrasts the present moment (πρόσκαιρον) with the future time (αἰών), and the use of ὕστερον confirms that αἰώνιος means “pertaining to the future aeon” and the worm αἰώνιος is that which pertains to the future aeon.

Ἀἰδιος, the philosophical term meaning “eternal” proper, in an absolute sense, is often preferred when Basil, instead of quoting or echoing Scripture, speaks in his own voice, especially concerning the absolute eternity of God, of the Son who is eternally generated, of the Spirit, of divine attributes, of intelligible entities, and of the future life, blessedness, and the like. In this case, Basil emphasises the fact that this life will be absolutely eternal. Now, it is all the more remarkable that Basil uses αἰδιος *only* in the case of *positive* expressions indicating the future life and beatitude, and *never* with expressions denoting damnation. Exactly like Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, he *never* speaks of αἰδιον fire or punishment αἰδιος, thus seeming to exclude an otherworldly fire or punishment that are conceived as absolutely eternal and without any end, and he clearly endows αἰώνιος with the sense of “pertaining to the world to come.” This strict linguistic consistency does not come as a surprise in an author who knew Origen very well. In *Gord. Mart.* PG 31,505,14 Basil has martyr Gordius say: Should I reject Christ, “so that I may gain the reward of a few days? But I shall be punished for the entire aeon to come,” αἰῶνα ὅλον ζημιωθήσομαι. The martyr adds: “It is obvious madness to die with art, and with evil and treachery to prepare for oneself punishment in the world to come,” αἰωνίαν κόλασιν. The “entire aeon to come” refers to the next aeon, which will last until the end of the aeon itself, or of all aeons. Neither Nyssen nor Nazianzen, nor Basil elsewhere, use αἰών in the sense of absolute eternity; therefore, there is no reason to suppose that Basil departs from this usage in this passage. And it is certain that Basil never calls death, punishment, fire and so on αἰδια; thus, he never describes otherworldly punishment, death, or fire as absolutely eternal.

To be sure, Basil never professes explicitly the doctrine of apokatastasis; he surely had pastoral concerns about its diffusion among unprepared people,<sup>209</sup> and indeed this worry was already felt by Origen. Basil’s anthropology is undeveloped and he does not treat extensively the creation of the human being and of rational creatures or their destiny in the *telos*. However, if we consider Basil’s clear awareness of the different meanings that αἰώνιος bears in the Bible (none of them being “eternal” unless in reference to God), and

<sup>209</sup> On Basil’s attitude toward unprepared and uneducated people see J. Maxwell, “The Attitudes of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus toward Uneducated Christians,” *Studia Patristica* 47 (2010) 117–122.

the exceptionally consistent semantic usage of αἰδῖος and αἰώνιος in Basil's works, which perfectly corresponds to that of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, it is all the more surprising to find a passage—notably, and surely not accidentally, a *pastoral* passage—in which the various Gospel expressions indicating punishment in the other world are considered evidence of eternal death and punishment, on a par with eternal life, ignoring entirely the idea, which Basil himself certainly did not ignore, that only life is said to be αἰδῖος—not only by the Bible, but by Basil himself—whereas death, fire, punishment etc. are only described as αἰώνια. This problematic passage has been handed down in Basil's short *Regulae* for his monks, 267 (PG 31,1264,30–1265,47), a highly interpolated work, and was briefly taken over long afterwards by Symeon Metaphrastes, *Or. 14 De iudicio* 3,551–552. The core argument of this passage is that αἰώνιοι punishments must be understood as absolutely eternal, otherwise neither could αἰώνιος life be eternal. This passage goes so far as to declare that those who admit that otherworldly punishments will not be eternal are even inspired by the devil. Among these people, as Basil knew perfectly well, there were surely Origen, whom he esteemed so highly, his sister Macrina, and his brother Gregory, to whom he ascribed excessive goodness and simplicity as the harshest criticism (χρηστότης, ἀπλότης) in *Ep.* 58,6 and 100,7, and whom he created bishop and praised highly in *Ep.* 98: "I wish my brother Gregory could govern a church that is commensurate with his gifts: but this would have been the entire Church under the sun! Since this is impossible, then, let him not be a bishop who receives dignity from the place, but let the place receive dignity from the bishop. For it is typical of a really great man not only to be worthy of great things, but also to magnify small things with his power."

I shall tackle in a moment the problem of this apparent contradiction and its possible solutions. First I would like to remark the documentary importance of this passage, whether it was written by Basil—notwithstanding the patent contradiction with his own terminological use—or not. For it attests that in the day of its author, the second half of the fourth century or even afterwards if the author is not Basil, the doctrine of apokatastasis was still professed by many Christians, who believed that otherworldly punishments would come to an end for all, sooner or later. Here is the passage at stake:

QUESTION: If 'one will be punished with many beatings and one with few,'<sup>210</sup> how can some say that there will not be an end to punishment?

<sup>210</sup> This passage was cited as evidence for the limited duration of otherworldly punishments by Theodore of Mopsuestia, a near contemporary of Basil (see below). It clearly was, or became, a matter of debate in relation to the issue of restoration.

ANSWER: Things that seem ambiguous and expressed in a veiled way in some passages of the Scripture inspired by God are clarified on the basis of the more explicit words found in other passages. Now, in a passage the Lord says that these will go to αἰώνιος punishment, in another passage he sends some to αἰώνιον fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, and yet another time he mentions the Gehenna of fire and adds: “where their worm does not die and their fire is not extinguished”; again, the prophet has foretold, concerning some, that “their worm will not die and their fire will not be extinguished.”<sup>211</sup> In divinely inspired Scripture there are these and similar passages in many places. But, *for a deception of the devil, many people*, as though they forgot these and similar statements of the Lord, *adhere to the conception of the end of punishment*, out of an audacity that is even superior to their sin. For, *if at a certain moment there is an end to αἰώνιος punishment, αἰώνιος life will certainly have an end* as well. And if we do not admit of thinking this concerning life, what reason should there be for assigning an end to αἰώνιος punishment? In fact, the characterisation of αἰώνιος is equally ascribed to both. For Jesus states: “These will go to αἰώνιος punishment, and the righteous to life αἰώνιος.”

If one accepts this, one must understand that the expressions “One will be punished with many sufferings,” or “with few,” *do not indicate an end, but a difference in punishment*. For, if the Lord is a righteous judge, he is so not only with the virtuous, but also with the wicked, and renders to each one according to one’s deeds. One may deserve the eternal fire, and this, milder or stronger; one may deserve the worm that does not die, and his such a to cause *more or less suffering, in accord with each one’s desert*; and another may deserve the Gehenna, which is similarly differentiated in its kinds of punishments, and another person may deserve the outer darkness, where one may be found only in weeping, another also in the gnashing of teeth, according to the duration of these punishments. And it seems indeed to be the case that there are an outer and an inner darkness. And the Proverbs’ expression, “down to the bottom of hell,” indicates that there are some who are in hell, to be sure, but not on its bottom; these undergo a less severe punishment.<sup>212</sup> Now, too, it is possible to notice something of the sort in bodily illnesses: one has fever along with other symptoms and suffering; another has only fever; the latter is not found in the same situation as the former; and yet another one has no fever, but is afflicted by some suffering in his limbs, and this one too, in turn, has more or less pain than another one. Now, also what the Lord said, “with many or few pains,” was said according to the established custom [...] Likewise, the expression “to be

<sup>211</sup> Jesus, however, reworking an Old Testament quotation, removes precisely every expression that might imply an idea of eternal duration. See I. Ramelli, “Origene ed il lessico dell’eternità,” *Adamantius* 14 (2008) 100–129.

<sup>212</sup> Basil, however, as I shall show soon, did not conceive of hell as a local and spatial reality, a dimensional place, in which physical punishments take place. He is on the same line as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, who thought that Hades is not a place (*De an.* 68B ff.).

*tortured by many or few punishments" should not be understood—I repeat—in the sense of an extension in time or a fulfilment in time, but in the sense of a differentiation in punishments.*

The “many” scriptural passages that are invoked here as supporting the idea of an eternal punishment, however, *never* contain the term αἰδῖος, but only αἰώνιος; Basil personally was careful in differentiating the two terms. Of course αἰώνιος is equally ascribed to both life and punishment in Scripture, as the author of this passage remarks, but in this case αἰώνιος means “of the other world,” not “eternal.” Both Origen and Nyssen postulated a different duration for otherworldly punishments (which, in their view, are not retributive, but purifying). And yet, Origen also admitted of a difference in intensity: *ite in ignem aeternum: alius [...] gravius ac vehementius cruciatur pro magnitudine poenarum, alius remissius, cuius leviora peccata sunt* (Fr. in Prov. PG 13,18A). Origen’s argument is reported by Psellus:

Origen, who introduced this view, established that punishments [τὰς κολλάσεις] for souls are *not eternal* [αἰδῖους]. For he states that it would be absurd if a judge inflicted *eternal* punishments [αἰωνίαις κακώσεσι] to a soul that sinned for *three years, or more, or less*. (Psell. *Op. Theol.* 70,201)

Origen’s was clearly a quantitative argument based on the incompatibility between a finite sin and infinite suffering. It is remarkable that Psellus, first adopting the terminology of Origen himself, uses αἰδῖος to indicate absolute eternity and infinity. This, as I have pointed out, and as both Origen and Basil knew very well, is used in the Bible only in reference to otherworldly life, not to otherworldly suffering, death, fire, and the like, which are only called αἰώνια. Only afterwards does Psellus treat the two adjectives as synonyms. But the distinction was clear to Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil, and I find it all the more surprising that in the passage from the shorter *Regulae* this distinction is completely blurred.

This striking contradiction with Basil’s very consistent linguistic use may be explained in several ways. (1) One may be found in Basil’s own pastoral concerns—which were not too far from those of Origen himself, who thought that spiritually immature people do good out of fear, and not yet out of love, and therefore need the threat of eternal punishment in order to behave well, as a pedagogical strategy.<sup>213</sup> Thus, Basil might have decided to sacrifice his terminological and conceptual consistency for the sake of pastoral care.

<sup>213</sup> H. Pietras, *L’escatologia della Chiesa* (Rome, 2006), 97 also observes, rightly, that both Origen and Basil spoke “in un certo modo alla gente semplice, in un altro ai più dotti.”

(2) Another possible explanation, which in fact I deem probable, lies in suspecting an interpolation, which is indeed very easy to perform in a text that is entirely structured on *quaestiones et responsiones*, simply juxtaposed to one another, without any thematic connexion. It is clear that in such a texture the addition of one more question and the relevant answer could be done at any moment by anyone who wished to ascribe to the authority of the great Basil a glaring condemnation of the apokatastasis doctrine. The *Amphilochia* ascribed to Photius, for instance, provide a very good example of such heavily interpolated *quaestiones et responsiones*: the Prologue states that there are three hundred *quaestiones et responsiones* in all, but the extant manuscripts include more, and in variable amounts, and in different orders into the bargain. This clearly denotes that several questions and answers were added afterwards. Also, it is well known that many of the works ascribed to Basil are in fact spurious: more than a half of those known, which amounts to an exceptional percentage vis-à-vis other authors. In particular, a very high number of interpolations is to be found in his *moralia* to monks, and specifically the *Regulae brevius tractatae* are considered by Panayiotis Tzamalikos heavily interpolated at best, if not spurious at all.<sup>214</sup> Photius himself, I think, testifies to these interpolations by observing in *Bibl. Cod.* 191 that he read two books of *Ascetica* by Basil of Caesarea, whose second book included 55 *quaestiones et responsiones* and 313 short *regulae*. This is a smaller amount than what is found in our manuscripts, which means that many were added over time and cannot obviously be authentic. I do suspect that one of such interpolations may be represented by the passage at stake, which blatantly contradicts Basil's linguistic usage, in addition to declaring inspired by the devil Basil's own sister, his brother the bishop of Nyssa, and Origen. Unless Basil's pastoral concerns had him neglect all this and any linguistic and conceptual consistence.

Moreover, unless one accepts the hypothesis of an interpolation, one should suppose that these concerns caused Basil to neglect what he knew perfectly well, that is, that Origen had already ruled out the very argument that is adduced in the passage under examination—namely that, if life is eternal, death also must be eternal as its parallel and opposite. This argument, which appears in the suspect passage—a passage that, if it is not ascribable to Basil with certainty, then cannot be dated with certainty either: one can only say that it is posterior to Basil's authentic work and anterior to Basil's manuscripts and to Symeon's paraphrase—, has its first sure attesta-

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<sup>214</sup> In *The Real Cassian and per litteras*.

tion only several decades after Basil's death and after the Origenistic controversy of the very end of the fourth century—beginning of the fifth (the controversy that involved Theophilus, the Tall Brothers, Epiphanius, Jerome, and Rufinus). This attestation is found in the late phase of Augustine's thought—when he criticised Origen's thought after adhering to it beforehand<sup>215</sup>—in *CD* 21,23: *dicere autem in hoc uno eodemque sensu, vita aeterna sine fine erit, supplicium aeternum finem habebit, multum absurdum est*. But Augustine, whose knowledge of Greek was extremely limited, did not know the meaning of αἰώνιος, which was translated into Latin as *aeternus*, just as ἄδιος also was. Basil, on the contrary, not only knew the meaning of αἰώνιος perfectly well, but he certainly knew that Origen had already refuted in advance the argument that was later proposed both by Augustine and in the passage that has been handed down under Basil's name. Origen's refutation is found in *Comm. in Rom.* 5,7: two eternal entities that are opposed to each other are two contraries, what in logic we would call contradictories; now, one contradictory utterly excludes the other; therefore, eternal life, far from implying eternal death (as Augustine and the passage ascribed to Basil maintain), excludes it altogether:

*Aeternum aeterno contrarium non erit, sed idem. Nunc autem certum est mortem uitae esse contrarium: certum est ergo quod, si uita aeterna est, mors esse non possit aeterna. Cum mors animae, quae est nouissimus inimicus, fuerit destructa [...], regnum mortis pariter cum morte destructum erit.*

That life will be eternal was assured by the Bible, from which Origen knew that Christ is life (John 11:25; 14:6) and death will be destroyed in the end (1 Cor 15:26); that death will be eternal he found nowhere in the Bible, where death is only called αἰώνιος but never ἄδιος. The author of the problematic passage, instead of Basil, may be a later interpolator who knew and used Augustine's argument, without knowing, or perhaps pretending not to know, that Origen had refuted it in advance. All the more so in that the very same argument—if beatitude is eternal, damnation also must be eternal—was produced by Germanus of Constantinople in the early eighth century in his work *On Retribution* (*ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 233). Here Germanus, after criticising the doctrine of the restoration of the demons and of human sinners after a limited punishment (μετὰ τινὰς ποινὰς ὠρισμένως), he produced against it “the words of the Lord, the preaching of the apostles, and the testimony of the prophets, which clearly expound that, just as the ineffable beatitude of the just is eternal [αἰώνιος], so is also the punishment of sinners infinite

<sup>215</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section devoted to Augustine.



[ἀτελεύτητος] and unbearable.” Again αἰώνιος is mistaken as meaning “eternal” and a synonym of ἀτελεύτητος. It is clear that in the development of the debate on apokatastasis the meanings of the different nuances that the two terms, αἰώνιος and αἰῆδιος, bore was completely lost.

It is highly significant that Basil’s general approach to Origen is very positive. I have already mentioned that, together with Gregory Nazianzen, he is very probably the author of the collection of excerpts from Origen’s writings called *Philocalia*, which clearly attests a profound esteem of Origen, whose thought was transmitted to the Cappadocians via Gregory Thaumaturgus. Still some years before his death, Basil, in *De Spiritu Sancto*, a work full of Origenian themes, at § 73 speaks of Origen in terms of great appreciation: “Already Origen in many of his *Discourses on the Psalms* renders glory ‘with’ the Holy Spirit, although he has conceptions that are not entirely right in every respect on the Spirit; however, *for many times he* too, induced by the force of the common use, *has expressed himself in a pious way*. In the sixth, I think, on his *Commentaries on John*, he has manifestly declared that it is necessary to adore it, textually writing [*the quotation follows*]. And again, in his *Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, he says [...]”<sup>216</sup>

Basil’s admiration of Gregory Thaumaturgus and other disciples of Origen is also telling. In his Letter 28, written in 368 CE to the Church of Neocæsarea, Basil highly praises the Thaumaturgus, the direct disciple of Origen, who brought Origen’s thought to Cappadocia and in particular to Macrina the Elder, the grandmother of Macrina the Younger, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil himself. In other passages, too, Basil’s respect for the Thaumaturgus—who supported the apokatastasis doctrine himself—is manifest. Just as Gregory Nyssen devoted to him an extremely laudatory biography, Basil calls him “the Great” and often praises him in his letters as a defender of orthodoxy, something that obviously was very dear to Basil’s heart in those years of “anti-Arian” battles. For instance, he praises the Thaumaturgus in Letter 204, in which he also mentions that Gregory’s words had been transmitted to him

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<sup>216</sup> Girardi, “Origene nel giudizio,” 1077, 1075, and 1088: “si risolve in un apprezzamento pressoché totale di Origene (e del suo impegno intellettuale) con tanto di testi appartenenti sia all’area pubblica che a quella più personale ed euristica del suo insegnamento: in breve, l’apologia delle tesi basiliane, qui più che per altri *testimonia*, fa volentieri tutt’uno con l’apologia di una sostanziale ortoprassi di Origene, anche su un tema dottrinale, lo Spirito Santo, i cui esiti apparivano discutibili nel IV secolo [...]. In Origene [Basilio] continua con determinazione e convinzione ad ammirare e amare il Maestro, nonostante le riserve, mai astiose e comunque circoscritte a precise posizioni di pensiero, che giudizio critico e più matura valutazione dottrinale non potevano eludere a distanza di più di un secolo.”

and his siblings by his grandmother. Basil also extols him in *De Spir. S.* 29,74. Both he and Origen exerted a deep influence over Basil's thought.<sup>217</sup> Basil also seems to depend on George of Laodicea, a follower of Eusebius and an anti-Eunomian, who in turn was strongly influenced by Origen, since, for instance, he seems to be the only author who adopted his technical term ἰδιότης in reference to each Person of the Trinity. This term was then taken over by Basil in turn—unless, as I suspect, Basil did not inherit it directly from Origen—; likewise, the concern for the divinity of the Spirit may have passed from Origen to Basil also through George.<sup>218</sup> Basil also praises other disciples or estimators of Origen, such as Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius, Firmilian of Caesarea († 268), Julius Africanus, all mentioned by him in the same passage in which he expresses appreciation in regard to Origen. Thus, he lists Origen and the Origenians among the guarantors of orthodoxy for science, sanctity, and authority. Moreover, it is clear that Basil's criticism of allegory in his *Hexaëmeron* should not be understood as directed against Origen, who is never mentioned by name therein, but rather as directed against radical allegorists and dualists such as "Gnostics" and Manichaeans,<sup>219</sup> all the more in that Basil is deeply influenced by Origen, for instance in his ascetic conception of Biblical exegesis.<sup>220</sup>

In the light of Basil's positive attitude towards the Origenians and Origen himself, the "question-and-answer" passage handed down under the name of Basil, in which the followers of Origen are declared to be inspired by the devil and are harshly execrated, looks even more suspect, unless Basil was really saying, for pastoral reasons, to people whom he deemed simple, something different from what he thought and even opposite to his linguistic use and his admiration, not only of Origen and the Origenians, but also of his brother Gregory, his sister Macrina, and his friend Gregory Nazianzen, who also believed in apokatastasis, as I shall argue in the next section.

It is meaningful that Gregory of Nyssa, in turn, esteemed Basil immensely. For instance, he wrote the continuation of Basil's *Hexaëmeron*, strenuously defended it, and praised Basil with great emphasis in the preface of his *De*

<sup>217</sup> See E. Giannarelli, "Donne, bambini, vescovi e santi," in *Il giusto che fiorisce come palma* (Rome, 2007), 171–184, *praes.* 176.

<sup>218</sup> The possible mediation of George is illustrated by M. Del Cogliano, "The Significance of George of Laodicea."

<sup>219</sup> See *Origene e l'Alessandrinismo cappadoce*, eds. M. Girardi–M. Marin (Bari, 2002), esp. M. Girardi, "L'esegesi esamereale di Basilio di Cesarea e Gregorio di Nissa," 75–113; Idem, "Basilio e Origene. Un cinquantennio di ricerca in Italia," *Adamantius* 5 (1999) 135–146.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. P.W. Martens, "Interpreting Attentively: The Ascetic Character of Biblical Exegesis According to Origen and Basil," in *Origeniana VIII*, 115 ff.

*hominis opificio*, with expressions such as the following: “Basil, this person who was really created after the model of God, whose soul was formed in the image of his Creator”; “our common *father* and teacher,” although Basil was Gregory’s *brother*; “I am not even capable of admiring him as he deserves”; “may it never be that my work contaminates his own: it would be an outrageous impiety for the one whose sublime teaching I want to exalt ...,” and so on. What is more, Gregory puts Basil’s figure at the very beginning of his *De anima et resurrectione*, whose very first sentence is devoted to his beloved and revered brother: “Basil, great among the saints.” Basil’s death has afflicted and upset Gregory to such an extent that only with much effort can Macrina console and convince her brother. It is meaningful, to my mind, that Nyssen decided to dedicate to the memory of Basil and his greatness *precisely* the dialogue in which he expounds most extensively and forcefully the doctrine of apokatastasis. The last part of this dialogue is even devoted to the depiction of the glorious restoration, such as it will be after the purification of all and the complete eviction of evil. Many vivid images are employed by Gregory to represent it.<sup>221</sup> I wonder whether he would have used Basil’s venerated figure, and so prominently, in a dialogue entirely devoted to the argument for universal apokatastasis, if Basil had really execrated this doctrine so overtly.

Basil’s anthropology is underdeveloped, as I have mentioned, and his eschatology all the more so. It would be difficult to find precise and elaborated statements in favour of, or against, apokatastasis in his works (apart, of course, from the passage that may be interpolated or dictated by pastoral concerns). But I shall show in a moment that, at least when he comes to reflect on 1 Cor 15:28, he does interpret it as an announcement of the eventual universal restoration, exactly as Origen, Eusebius, and Nyssen did.

Basil’s doctrines and ideas often coincide with Nyssen’s and demonstrate an Origenian influence that is extremely strong in the case of Gregory,<sup>222</sup> but are also present in Basil. Basil too, for example, located the image of God in the rational soul of each human being, in accord with the “theology of the image”<sup>223</sup> which for Origen and Gregory Nyssen was a fundamental premise of the doctrine of apokatastasis. For they thought that the image of God in each one can be blurred or covered with dirtiness, but never cancelled by

<sup>221</sup> See my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa Sull'anima*.

<sup>222</sup> I very much hope to devote a systematic investigation and demonstration to this.

<sup>223</sup> See only N.V. Harrison, *God's Many-Splendored Image. Theological Anthropology for Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2011).

sin. Basil, exactly like Gregory Nyssen,<sup>224</sup> describes baptism as the restoration of the image of God in the human being in PG 31,1537AB: Baptism opens the way to the apokatastasis of the original glory of humanity, which consists in being in the image of God.<sup>225</sup> Indeed, Basil also relates the apokatastasis of humanity to Christ's incarnation, on which it depends, especially in *C. Eun.* PG 29,729A: ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δι' ἐμφυσήσεως ἀποκαθισταμένη· συντρέχειν γὰρ δεῖ τῇ κατ' ἀρχὴν καινότητι τὴν νῦν ἀνακαίνωσιν καὶ τὴν συνδρομήν. In the same way, both Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, as I have argued, have apokatastasis depend on Christ's incarnation and resurrection.

Moreover, like Origen, Nyssen, and Evagrius who was a disciple of his, Basil too supported the ontological insubstantiality of evil, to which he devoted a whole homily (*God Is Not the Author of Evil*, in PG 31). Evil is ontologically negative; it is a lack of Good and therefore doomed to definitely disappear in the *telos*. It derives from an infirmity of the soul, which fails to adhere to the Good, that is, God, and the absolute Beauty, which attracts all. Such an infirmity of the soul calls for a therapeutic approach and treatment; this perspective is clear especially in Origen and Nyssen, according to whom the principal physician of the soul is Christ. The sick soul must be healed, even with drastic therapies if it is seriously ill. But the goal is the health of the soul, which will be attained by an infallible Physician: Christ. For such a Physician, who is also the Creator of all, no one is incurable, as Origen argued in *Princ.* 3,6,5.

The aforementioned therapeutic perspective is parallel to the pedagogic perspective embraced, not only by Clement, Origen and Nyssen, who used it in support of their apokatastasis doctrine, but also by Basil, especially in his *Hexaëmeron*, *Commentary on Isaiah*, and *Homilies on Psalms*. For them, Christ is not only the Physician, but also the Teacher par excellence. The world is a school for rational souls, and Basil is clear that all profit from it: "It was created in order to provide a *great* advantage to *all* beings, because it is the school of rational souls, the place in which they are *educated to the knowledge of God*." Indeed, in the first Homily on the *Hexaëmeron*, Basil expounds a conception of this world that is very close to that of Origen. This world is a θεογνωσίας παιδευτήριον, a διδασκαλείον.

<sup>224</sup> See my "Baptism in Gregory of Nyssa's Theology."

<sup>225</sup> "Ὡς περ ἀνδρίας συντρίβεις συνθλασθεὶς τε καὶ ἀφανίσας τὴν ἔνδοξον μορφήν τοῦ βασιλέως, ἄνωθεν μορφοῦται ὑπὸ τοῦ σοφοῦ τεχνίτου καὶ ἀγαθοῦ δημιουργοῦ ἀντιποιουμένου τῆς δόξης τοῦ ἰδίου πλάσματος, καὶ εἰς τὴν ἀρχαίαν δόξαν ἀποκαθίσταται· οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς, παθόντες διὰ τὴν παρακοὴν τῆς ἐντολῆς, κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον, 'Ἀνθρώπος ἐν τιμῇ ὣν οὐ συνήκε, παρασυμβλήθη τοῖς κτήνεσι τοῖς ἀνοήτοις, καὶ ὡμοιώθη αὐτοῖς,' ἀνακληθῶμεν εἰς τὴν πρώτην δόξαν τῆς εἰκότος τοῦ Θεοῦ."

In his Commentary on Isa 2:85, which is very probably authentic,<sup>226</sup> Basil expresses a view that is in perfect line with this and similar to that adopted by Origen in his *Homilies on Jeremiah*. God's declaration that he will not forgive his people for the seriousness of their sins is presented as a pedagogical threat aimed at the salvation of the people itself, a παιδαγωγία σωτήριος. This threat has a good aim, since its author is good (God is the Good itself); therefore, it is in fact a benefit: τοῦτο ἐπ' εὐεργεσία ὁ Ἄγαθός ἐνεργεῖ, "the Good one does this as a benefit." A passage from Basil's *Homilies on Psalms*, PG 29,313,44–50, then, even seems to be copied down from Origen's *Homilies on Jeremiah*, since it takes over both Origen's quotations from Jeremiah and Origen's interpretation of these, with emphasis on God's strategy of giving death and bad things first and then restoring to life and giving good things.<sup>227</sup> This is all the more remarkable in that Basil is commenting on the Psalms, and not on Jeremiah. It seems to me evident that Basil wrote this passage with Origen in mind, and that Basil's passage, just like Origen's, focuses on God's action of restoring, with the very same quotation containing the verb ἀποκαθίστημι.<sup>228</sup>

God's being the Good itself is also at the basis of Basil's *De Spir. S.* 16. Christ's economy, that is, his incarnation and work for the sake of humanity, has taken place "according to the goodness of God," κατὰ τὴν ἀγαθότητα τοῦ

<sup>226</sup> Basil's Commentary on Isaiah is attested by an abundant ms. tradition, in which the attribution to Basil is unanimous; unfortunately it only extends up to Ch. 16 of Isaiah. Editions: PG 30,117–668; P. Trevisan, *San Basilio. Commento al profeta Isaia*, 2 vols. (Turin, 1939). Its authenticity has been questioned (see, e.g., CPG 2, 2911; O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, vol. 3 [Darmstadt, 1962], 147–148; J. Quasten, *Patrology* [Westminster, Mar. 1963], 218–219), but on no solid grounds. This work is recognised as Basil's by St. Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Simeon Logothetes, Antony Melissa, Tarasius, and the Greek scholiast on the Letters of Paul, who is supposed to be Oecumenius. Its authenticity has been convincingly defended by Nikolaj A. Lipatov on the basis of close methodological similarities between this commentary and Basil's *Hexaëmeron* in theology, exegesis, Biblical textual discussion, expressions, and use of philosophical and scientific knowledge, in two main works: "The Problem of the Authorship of the Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah Attributed to St. Basil the Great," in *Studia Patristica* 27 (Louvain, 1993), 42–48, and his translation of the Commentary itself, with introduction: St. Basil the Great, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* (Mandelbachtal, 2001). R. Gryson–D. Szmatala, "Les commentaires patristiques sur Isaïe d'Origène à Jérôme," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 36 (1990), 1–41, also deem the commentary authentic.

<sup>227</sup> On which see Ramelli, "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah."

<sup>228</sup> I limit myself to quoting the most relevant passage from Basil (for Origen, whose expressions are practically identical, see the article to which I refer in the previous note): ἡδίων ἐστὶν ἢ ἀπόλαυσις, προκαθηγησάμενων αὐτῆς τῶν λυπούντων. Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἀποκτενῶ, φησί, καὶ ζῆν ποιήσω. Δευτέρα ἡ εὐεργεσία μετὰ τὴν κόλασιν. Πατάξω, καὶ γὰρ ἰάσονται. Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἀλλεῖν ποιεῖ, καὶ πάλιν ἀποκαθίστησιν. ἔπαισε, καὶ αἱ χεῖρες αὐτοῦ ἰάσαντο. Προλαμβάνει τὰ κακούντα, ἵνα μονιμώτεροι ἡμῖν αἱ χάριτες γένωνται.

Θεοῦ. And it is brought to perfection by the Spirit. The whole typological and prophetic system that joins the OT and the NT depends on the Spirit. The Spirit assisted Jesus in his miracles, in resisting temptations, and in his resurrection; then, the Spirit assists the life of the Church, and it will assist all in the eschatological scenario. For it will be present at the second coming of Christ and the Judgement. Then, the crown of the just will be a grace of the Spirit, whereas the others will be separate from it, and this will constitute their very suffering. Otherworldly suffering will not be physical: this idea is rejected as something μυθικόν by Basil, just as by Origen and Gregory Nyssen.

Now, indeed, even if it is not mingled to those who are unworthy, however it seems to be present in some way to those who have received the seal, once they have accepted it, and it waits for their salvation as a result of their conversion; then, on the other hand, it will be completely *cut off from the soul that should reject its grace* [...] Then, the Spirit itself is both the reward of the just and the first condemnation of sinners, in case they should be deprived even of that which they now seem to possess.

The salvific Spirit will withdraw only from the soul that rejects its grace and thus refuses salvation. It is unknown whether indeed any soul will reject salvation till the very end, especially if it is illuminated and healed by Christ.

Moreover, in his Commentary on Chapter 9 of the Book of Isaiah, 19—a work that, as I have mentioned, is very probably authentic and was not intended for a simple audience—, Basil observes that, if we acknowledge our sins, our punishment becomes, not eternal, but temporal, and thus it can be expiated by means of the purifying fire. If such an acknowledgment of sins, which clearly implies their rejection, can take place in the other world as well, so that the otherworldly fire becomes, not an eternal punishment with no positive purpose, but a purification, this clearly opens up the possibility of universal salvation. Basil's commentary on Isa 9 entirely focuses on the glorious announcement of salvation. Basil quotes Isaiah's words, emphasising that great is Christ's power, and his peace has no limit. He then sets out to interpret this passage by considering it to be an expression of the "doctrine of *salvation*," τὸ δόγμα τῆς σωτηρίας. Basil identifies the light in Isaiah with that of the Prologue of the Gospel of John: "the true light, which illuminates every human being" is the Logos. And the people that was in darkness is identified with those who were found in the ignorance of God. The Angel-Logos knows the Great Intention of God (being the ἄγγελος τῆς μεγάλης βουλῆς), that is, God's salvific plan, which had remained concealed for whole ages, and is finally announced to the ἔθνη as well. They also become heirs and contribute to the formation of one and the same body, that of Christ.

Christ's power, which in Isaiah's prophecy is said to be "on his shoulders," is referred by Basil to the Cross. For Christ, "lifted up on the cross, *has pulled up everyone to himself*," πάντας ἔλκυσεν πρὸς ἑαυτόν, with a Johannine quotation (John 12:31–32). This sounds really universalistic.

What is even more, Basil relates the peace established by Christ to his action of drawing all to himself and submitting all to himself, with a clear reference to the scenario of universal submission to Christ delineated in 1 Cor 15. Basil interprets it in the very same way as his brother Gregory did in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius* in reference to the eventual apokatastasis:

The peace given by the Lord extends to all eternity, since it knows neither limitations nor boundaries [ἀπεριόριστος καὶ ἀτερμάτιστος]. For *all the beings will submit to him* [πάντα γὰρ ὑποταγέσεται αὐτῷ], and all will recognise his power. And when *God has come to be "all in all"* [ὁ Θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πάσι], after those who created disorders with apostasies have been *pacified* [καθησυχασθέντων τῶν θορυβοῦντων ταῖς ἀποστασίαις], *all will hymn to God in a symphony of peace* [ἐν εἰρηνικῇ συμφωνίᾳ τὸν Θεὸν ὑμνήσουσι]. (Enarr. in Is. 9,227)

Basil is very clear here regarding the ultimate *telos*. He does not foresee the destruction or the exclusion of rebels, but their conversion and restoration to peace, with a view to the universal eventual harmony, just as it is delineated in Origen's, Bardaisan's, and Gregory Nyssen's conception of the *telos*. Gregory's commentary on 1 Cor 15:28 much insisted on the eventual universal salvation and harmony, which he saw foretold by Paul in that passage. In Basil's commentary, too, the hymns to God and the symphony of peace clearly indicate that the submission of all will not be forced, but voluntary, just as Origen and Nyssen maintained, in their equation between universal submission and universal salvation. In this connection, it is particularly worth observing that, exactly as Nyssen interprets—against the "neo-Arians"—Christ's submission in 1 Cor 15:28 as the submission of Christ's body, that is, all of humanity, which will therefore be saved, so does Basil too in *C. Eun.* 4 PG 29,695,20–26.<sup>229</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, in turn, as I have demonstrated thoroughly, drew his interpretation of this verse entirely from Origen, who had already interpreted it in an anti-subordinationistic way and in support of his doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>230</sup> Basil also knew Origen's interpretation of those words.

<sup>229</sup> Τότε καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Υἱὸς ὑποταγέσεται] Εἰ θεϊκῶς ὁ Υἱὸς τῷ Πατρὶ ὑποτάσσεται, ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἂν ὑποτέτακτο, ἐξ οὗ καὶ Θεὸς ἦν. Εἰ δὲ οὐχ ὑποτέτακτο, ἀλλ' ὕστερον ὑποταγέσεται, ἀνθρωπίνως, ὡς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, καὶ οὐ θεϊκῶς ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ.

<sup>230</sup> See Ramelli, "In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius ... (1 Cor 15,27–28)"; further evidence in "The Trinitarian Theology."

Basil's reflection on 1 Cor 15:28 (joined to that of John 12:31–32 and Isaiah 9) flatly contradicts the passage of the short *Regulae* which I suspect is interpolated, or else dictated by pastoral concerns, and which in any case strikingly differs from Basil's linguistic use and awareness.

In his commentary on Isaiah, which I am analysing, Basil goes on to remark that the Logos descended “out of mercy, first of all toward the weak,” τοῖς ἀσθενεστέροις. Another conception, similar to those of Nyssen and Origen, which Basil presents here again, is that of the therapeutic and pedagogical function of punishments, aimed at the conversion of sinners, if these are indispensable: “And the whole people did not convert, until it was not struck. As a consequence, for people of this kind, *beating is necessary* [...] Why does it hail? For our own fault, because we have a heart that does not want to repent, and *we do not convert unless we are struck*.” It is precisely the discourse on repentance that leads Basil to declare something very important in respect to the apokatastasis doctrine. After saying that a sin generates other sins, like darnel, Basil goes on to explain that this darnel will be burnt by fire, unless the series of sins is not interrupted by conversion. This he considers to be a threat; then, in a context that refers to the world to come, he observes that this darnel will be burnt out by the purifying fire, not at all for the perdition, but for the salvation of the purified sinner:

Then he adds that his wrath does not yet go away, but his hand, raised, is still up there, because of those who in the people make others err and go astray themselves, that is, all the impious, the wicked, and those who say iniquitous things. *The threat, however, in some way manifests the benefit* [ἔχει δέ τινα ἢ ἀπειλὴ εὐεργεσίας ἔμφασιν]: *iniquity will burn like fire* [καυθήσεται ἡ ἀνομία ὡς πῦρ]. For by the good Master, as a benefit toward human beings, it has been providentially arranged for the matter provided by iniquity to be doomed to disappearance [τὴν γὰρ παρασκευασθεῖσαν ὕλην ἐκ τῆς ἀνομίας ἀφανισμῷ παραδοθῆναι ἐπ'εὐεργεσίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων παρὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ Δεσπότης ὡκονόμεται]. And—he says—it will be devoured by fire like dry darnel, and will be *burnt out* [...] if we put off sin by means of its acknowledgment, we shall transform it into dry darnel, worthy of being devoured by the *purifying fire* [ὑπὸ τοῦ καθαρκτικοῦ πυρὸς καταβρωθῆναι].

The otherworldly fire, which Basil presents as giving light to the righteous and burning sinners (here in 10,544AB and in *Hex.* 6,336–338), assumes a purifying function even in its burning, so that its action comes to an end when purification is attained. In this passage Basil returns again to the theme of God's providential pedagogy, which Origen developed especially in his *Homilies on Jeremiah*. Basil refers to the dreadful fire that destroys iniquity and thus makes the benefit evident, in that it also turns out to be purifying, and in this the salvific aim of God's economy is made clear.



This is the backdrop against which to see the final vanishing (ἀφανισμός) of iniquity (ἀνομία) and evil. It is the same theme of the eventual ἀφανισμός τῆς κακίας as is found in Origen's, Nyssen's, and Evagrius's eschatology. Basil, like Origen and Nyssen, always highlights the importance of free will, and insists that, in order for one's sins to be burnt out like dry dandelion, it is necessary to acknowledge them and detach oneself from them.

Basil next comments on the verse, "The whole earth has been burnt up [συγκέκαυται] by the force of the Lord's wrath." Although here the fire is said to be caused by God's anger, Basil sees it again as a purifying fire intended, not do destroy, but to benefit those whom it burns:

He shows that earthly things are handed to the *punishing fire for the advantage/benefit of the soul* [τὰ γήϊνα τῷ πυρὶ τῷ κολαστικῷ παραδίδωται ἐπὶ εὐεργεσίᾳ τῆς ψυχῆς], in the same way as is also suggested by the Lord when he says: "I have come to cast fire onto the earth, and I would like to see it already kindled." And *the people, seen as burnt by fire, will represent the human being. He does not threaten destruction, but he indicates purification* [οὐκ ἀφανισμόν ἀπειλεῖ, ἀλλὰ τὴν κάθαρσιν ὑποφαίνει], in accord with what the Apostle says: "If the work of anyone is burnt, this person will suffer a loss; however, he himself *will be saved*, but only in this way, as through fire."

Basil could not be clearer. Even the otherworldly punishing fire (πῦρ κολαστικόν) is purifying: it punishes what is earthly for the purification of the soul. This is the fire brought about by the Lord, and cannot but aim at the good. Indeed, the adjective κολαστικόν derives from κόλασις, which is a kind of punishment that benefits the punished person. It does not derive from τιμωρία, which is a merely retributive, and not cathartic, punishment. What the fire under consideration will entirely destroy is evil, and not any human being; persons will rather be *purified* from evil by that fire. The Origenian perspective is here patent. Besides quoting Jesus's words on his own inflaming action, the other NT quotation that Basil adduces in support of his idea of the πῦρ αἰώνιον as a fire that consumes sins and evil deeds but at the same time purifies and saves the sinner is 1Cor 3:14–15, which focuses on the eschatological fire test: if one's deeds are good and resist like a strong building, this person will receive a reward; "if it is burnt, he will suffer a loss; however, he himself *will be saved*, so to say, *through fire*." This passage contemplates either an immediate salvation or a salvation "through fire"; there is no mention of a definitive damnation.

Paul's words have been interpreted as a reference to the otherworldly purification that renders salvation possible by Origen, *Hom. III in Ps. 36*; Jerome, *Lect. III in Amos*; Ambrose, *Exp. in Ps. 36*; Basil himself, Augustine, *Exp. in Ps. 36*; Caesarius, *Serm. 104*. Origen, Jerome, and Ambrose did not

posit, along with the purifying fire, a merely punishing and eternal fire, whereas Augustine, at least in his later phase, and others do distinguish these two kinds. As for Basil, he appears to subsume both functions into the same fire: punishment and definitive destruction for sins, and purification with a view to salvation for sinners. In this respect, Basil's perspective appears to be similar to that of Origen and of his own brother Gregory: it foresees the total eviction of evil, in that it is deprived of any ontological substance, and the purification of all, implying the salvation of all.

Basil's depiction of the Judgement and the condemnation of some to αἰώνιος death (not ἀίδιος death) in *Hom. in Ps.* 61,4 does not indicate an eternal damnation, but death and separation from God in the next world for those who have chosen delights in this world instead of virtue and the suffering that virtue always brings about in this world full of iniquity and corruption: "to choose a temporary pleasure and because of it to receive death in the other world, or to choose suffering in the exercise of virtue and use it to receive delight in the other world." Indeed, Basil's thought is perfectly parallel to that of his brother Gregory of Nyssa in his reflections on the parable of Dives and Lazarus in *De anima et resurrectione*: Lazarus chose the true good, and therefore suffering, in this world, and has rest and comfort in "Abraham's bosom" in the other world, while Dives chose delight and vice in this world (apparent goods), and thus suffering in the next.<sup>231</sup> But this does not mean in the least that for Gregory the otherworldly suffering of the wicked will be eternal. Neither does it need to mean so for Basil.

The passages from Basil which I have quoted so far blatantly contradict the bit from the short *Regulae* ascribed to him, which is likely to be interpolated (or inspired by pastoral concerns). Basil is strongly universalistic with regard to the eventual resurrection and Christians, who are one in baptism.<sup>232</sup> If he considered the resurrection to be a restoration, as his brother Gregory and Gregory Nazianzen did in the footsteps of Origen, this too would be significant in respect to apokatastasis. Moreover, Basil admits of the saints' intercession for sinners,<sup>233</sup> as a result of which the latter are liberated from their suffering: in *Or.* 10, PG 31,624, he says to the saints: "You will request the salvation of your brothers afflicted by suffering" (αἰτήσεις ἀδελφῶν σωτηρίαν καταπονουμένων). The context of this sentence is clearly

<sup>231</sup> See my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*.

<sup>232</sup> See M. Girardi, "Identità come totalità in trasformazione: Basilio di Cesarea su cristianesimo, giudaismo, paganesimo," *Classica et Christiana* 2 (2007) 79–96.

<sup>233</sup> On the origins of intercession in Christianity see my "Alle origini della figura dell'intercessore," and on eschatological intercession in the *Apocalypse of Peter* see above, Ch. 1.

eschatological: “from death you will pass on to life in the other world [...] you will dance dances in the world to come and will be crowned among the angels, remaining forever in the blessed choir.” Therefore, the salvation requested by the saints is the eschatological salvation of sinners.

Basil’s very depiction of the *telos* as the “eighth day,” which will be taken over especially by Maximus the Confessor, is in accord with the conception of apokatastasis, since it is characterised by absolute eternity (ἀιδιότης) and the cessation of all those “movements (of will)” that had creatures detach themselves from God (especially in *Enarr. in Is.* 1,180B; 2,260B; 4,333C–336A; 13,584C; *Hex.* 2,178–184). The basis for this conception was obviously to be found in Origen. And the very methodology used by Basil in his exegesis of the Bible (especially Genesis and Isaiah, in his *Hexaëmeron* and his *Commentary on Isaiah*) very closely resembles that of Origen. Just as Origen, in order to determine the meaning, including the allegorical meaning, of a term or figure in a certain passage of Scripture had recourse to all other Scriptural passages in which that same element occurs, so does Basil as well. He carefully establishes the meaning of a word on the basis of a comparative search of occurrences of that given word in other Scriptural passages.<sup>234</sup> Moreover, it is clear that in both of the aforementioned exegetical works Basil was using Origen’s *Hexapla*.<sup>235</sup> He refers not only to the LXX, but also to the Hebrew Bible and the other Greek versions, Aquilas, Symmachus, and Theodotion, and even to the *obeloi* used in Origen’s edition and to collations of manuscripts and translations.<sup>236</sup>

Furthermore, Basil extensively uses the terminology of apokatastasis. I have already had occasion to adduce some instances, such as that from his *Commentary on the Psalms*, paralleling Origen’s *Homilies on Jeremiah*. I shall not take into consideration all the occurrences of ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι in the astronomical sense, or in the sense of a restitution to

<sup>234</sup> See, e.g., *Enarr. in Is.* 1,228A; 2,257BC; 3,329A; 5,384BC; 5,424B; 8,485BC; 15,629BC; *Hex.* 1,108–110; 2,178; 3,206; 3,230–232.

<sup>235</sup> This is rightly noticed by Lipatov, “The Problem of the Authorship,” 44.

<sup>236</sup> Unlike Origen, who knew some Hebrew, Basil did not, but he relied on Origen’s work and on a certain Syrian whom he mentions (unfortunately not by name). In *Hex.* 2,168 this Syrian is said to have compared the Holy Spirit to a female bird generating eggs alive and warming them (the same imagery occurs again in *Enarr. in Is.* 10,540B). Indeed, the word “Spirit” in Syriac is feminine and the Syriac tradition tended to represent the Holy Spirit as a female being. Bardaisan, in particular, represented it as a female bird who generates a child/chick, according to Ephrem, *Hymni contra Haereses* 55,1, who, however, is speaking here of Bardaisan’s disciples proper. See Ramelli, *Bardaisan*, 200. These were Syrians, and the time of Ephrem is almost the same as that of Basil.

health after an illness,<sup>237</sup> or in the trivial sense of “to render,” “to give back.”<sup>238</sup> But the rest of the occurrences are most significant, and especially some of them do refer to the final universal restoration. It is meaningful that these mostly come from writings of Basil’s that were not destined for “simple” people: they rather derive from his letters and his Commentary on Isaiah. Here I have already pointed out his interpretation of 1 Cor 15:28, which appears to be very much along the lines of Origen, like that of his brother Gregory. Sometimes, in his letters, Basil speaks of restoration into the Church for those who are outside;<sup>239</sup> one of the most interesting aspects that emerge from these examples, in particular from Letter 188,4, is the connection that Basil makes between restoration (although here it is not the final restoration) and repentance, μετάνοια. The same connection between apokatastasis and repentance is drawn in *Enarr. in Is.* 1,30, where the astronomical apokatastasis serves as a metaphor of the apokatastasis of human beings to their original condition.<sup>240</sup> Evagrius, too, will use astronomical apokatastasis as a metaphor of the final apokatastasis of all rational creatures to their initial state in *Kephalaia Gnostica* 3,60.<sup>241</sup>

<sup>237</sup> For instance in *Hom. de grat. act.* PG 31,220AB, where Basil is listing many external and apparent goods that produce joy: φίλου παρουσία, γονέων χρονία συντυχία, χρημάτων εὐρέσεις, τιμαὶ παρὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, πρὸς ὑγίαν ἐκ χαλεπῆς ἀβρώστιας ἀποκατάστασις, ἡ λοιπὴ τοῦ βίου εὐημερία.

<sup>238</sup> E.g., in *Ep.* 270,1: τὴν μὲν παῖδα, ὅπου περ ἂν εὕρης, ἀφελόμενος πάσῃ εὐτονίᾳ ἀποκατάστησον τοῖς γονεῦσι; in *Ep.* 348,1: οὐχ Ὁμηρος δ’ ἀποκαταστήσειν κατεπηγγέιλαι; in *Hex.* 5,2, with a hermeneutical meaning (Οὗτω γὰρ καὶ τὸ τῆς λέξεως ἀκόλουθον ἀποκαταστήσῃαι δυνήσεται); the same hermeneutical meaning is found in *Enarr. in Is.* prol. 6 (Ἐάν οὖν ὀργιζόμενον, ἢ λυπούμενον, ἢ μεταμελόμενον, ἢ μὴ κατ’ ἀξίαν τινὶ χρώμενον, ἢ Γραφὴ λέγει, ζητεῖν προσήκει τὸ τῆς λέξεως βούλημα, καὶ μεριμνᾶν τίνα τρόπον ἀποκαταστήσῃαι δυνήθωμεν, οὐχὶ δὲ ἀνατρέπειν τὰς ἀξιολόγους περὶ Θεοῦ ὑπολήψεις). Like Origen, Basil too is concerned that passages of Scripture speaking of God as endowed with passions may be misunderstood: it is necessary, he explains, to return them their right meaning.

<sup>239</sup> *Ep.* 251,3: τοὺς τὰ ἐκείνου φρονούντας ἐπὶ ὀρθότητι ἀποσεμνύνει, μόνον ἂν εἰς τὴν τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως αὐτοῦ σπουδὴν συνεργήσωσιν. *Ep.* 188,4: Δεῖ δὲ μὴ πάντῃ αὐτοὺς ἀπείργειν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἀλλ’ ἀκροάσεως αὐτοὺς ἀξιοῦν ἐν δύο που ἔτεσιν ἢ τρισί, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐπιτρέπειν συστήκειν μὲν, τῆς δὲ κοινωνίας τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι, καὶ οὕτως ἐπιδειξαμένους καρπὸν τίνα μετανοίας ἀποκαθιστᾶν τῷ τόπῳ τῆς κοινωνίας. *Ep.* 263,3: ἀπελαθείς τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς διὰ τὸ ἐν τῇ Μελιτινῇ προκαθηρῆσθαι, ὁδὸν ἑαυτῷ τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως ἐπενόησε τὴν ὡς ὑμᾶς ἀφίξιν. Καὶ τίνα μὲν ἔστιν ἃ προετάρχη αὐτῷ παρὰ τοῦ μακαριωτάτου ἐπισκόπου Λιβερίου, τίνα δὲ ἃ αὐτὸς συνέθετο ἀγνοοῦμεν, πλὴν ὅτι ἐπιστολὴν ἐκόμισεν ἀποκαθιστῶσαν αὐτόν, ἣν ἐπιδείξας τῇ κατὰ Τύαναν συνόδῳ ἀποκατέστη τῷ τόπῳ; *Ep.* 265,3: χρὴ καὶ τοὺς ἐν τῇ Δύσει καὶ τοὺς κατὰ τὴν Ἀνατολὴν κοινωνικοὺς συμψήφους αὐτῶν τῇ ἀποκατάστασει γενέσθαι.

<sup>240</sup> Ὁ ἄφρων ὡς σελήνη ἀλλοιοῦται, τὴν πρὸς τὸ φῶς ἐπάνοδον, ὅπερ ἐξέλιπεν ὁ ἄφρων καὶ τὴν διὰ μετάνοιαν εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαταστασιν ἑορτὴν ἡγείσθαι τὸν φιλάδελφον καὶ συμπαθεῖ, ὁ λόγος βούλεται· οἰονεῖ νοσηρὴν ἄγαν τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ ἐν φωτὶ βίου· ἐπειδὴ ἐξέλιπε μὲν τὸ φῶς διὰ τὴν εἰς τὸ χεῖρον τροπὴν ἐπαλινδρόμησε δὲ πάλιν πρὸς αὐτὸ διὰ τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς.

<sup>241</sup> See below in this same chapter, section on Evagrius.

Basil has apokatastasis depend on repentance also in *Enarr. in Is.* 1,42, in which, moreover, he associates apokatastasis with οικείωσις to God, who is the Good, whereas, on the contrary, separation from the Good through sin is described as an alienation (ἀλλοτριώσις) from God: ἐάν τις διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου ἀλλοτριωθείς τοῦ Θεοῦ οἶονεῖ ἀπορφανισθῆ τῆς προνοίας αὐτοῦ, κρῖσει δικαίᾳ καὶ ἐπιστημονικῇ εἰς τὴν πρὸς Θεὸν οἰκείωσιν αὐτὸν ἀποκαταστήσαι σπούδασον [...] κρίνατε αὐτῷ τοὺς ὠφελίμους τρόπους τῆς μετανοίας ὑποτιθέμενοι, “if one has transgressed the law and has become *alienated from God*, as though he had been deprived of God’s providence, you please be quick to *restore him to familiarity with God*, by means of a righteous and intelligent judgment [...] Please judge by offering him useful ways of *repentance*.”<sup>242</sup> This kind of restoration to familiarity with God does not necessarily refer to the final apokatastasis, but can already take place in this world. The description of apokatastasis as οικείωσις will be developed by Nyssen to great profundity; he will see apokatastasis not only as a return of rational creatures to οικείωσις with God, but also as God’s own great οικείωσις, God’s re-appropriation of his own creatures, formerly alienated by evil.<sup>243</sup>

In his treatise on the Holy Spirit, indeed, Basil declares that the restoration of humanity into Paradise, the Kingdom of heavens, and eternal glory, is made possible by the Spirit:

Διὰ Πνεύματος ἁγίου ἡ εἰς παράδεισον ἀποκατάστασις, ἡ εἰς βασιλείαν οὐρανῶν ἄνοδος [...] δόξης αἰδίου μετέχειν, καὶ ἀπαξᾶπλῶς ἐν παντὶ πληρώματι εὐλογίας γενέσθαι, ἐν τε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι. (*De Spir.* S. 15,36)

The restoration into Paradise comes about thanks to the Holy Spirit, the ascent to the Kingdom of Heavens [...], the participation in *absolutely eternal glory* and, in sum, the coming to be in the absolute *fullness of benediction*, both in this world and in the next.

In *Ep.* 264,1 Basil seems to refer to apokatastasis after death, describing it as a restoration to the original peace—that which was broken by sin—and as threatened by one obstacle, apostasy, which he sees active in his day.<sup>244</sup>

<sup>242</sup> On the relationship between repentance, forgiveness, and apokatastasis in Patristic see I. Ramelli, “Forgiveness in Patristic Philosophy: The Importance of Repentance and the Centrality of Grace,” in *Ancient Forgiveness: Classical, Judaic, and Christian Concepts*, eds. Ch. Griswold–D. Konstan (Cambridge, 2012), 195–215.

<sup>243</sup> See my “Gregory Nyssen’s Position in Patristic Debates on Slavery and Poverty and the Role of Asceticism,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 5 (2012) 87–118.

<sup>244</sup> “Ὡς περ τοῖς Ἰσραηλῖταις τὴν ἑβδομηκονταετίαν ὥρισεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων εἰς τὴν τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας καταδικήν, οὕτω τάχα καὶ ἡμᾶς ὁ Δυνατὸς χρόνῳ τινὶ ὠρισμένῳ παραδοὺς ἀνακαλέσεται

Apokatastasis is described by Basil in the same way as it is described by his brother Gregory in his *De anima et resurrectione* 101–104<sup>245</sup> and elsewhere: as the restoration to freedom after captivity due to enslavement to evil. In *Enarr. in Is.* 1,58–59, indeed, Basil makes it clear that first there will come the just Judgement (κρίμα), and then the manifestation of God's mercy (ἐλεημοσύνη); each human being becomes enslaved to sin and enchained by sin and thus receives its punishment in captivity, but then, when punishment is completed, thanks to God's mercy is restored to the original freedom in "the apokatastasis to the original condition":

Μετὰ γὰρ κρίματος σωθήσεται ἡ αἰχμαλωσία αὐτῆς, καὶ μετὰ ἐλεημοσύνης. Οὐδὲν ἐν τοῖς ἄνω περὶ πολεμίων αἰσθητῶν, οὐδὲ περὶ αἰχμαλώτων εἰπῶν, τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν αὐτῆς αἰχμαλωσίας ἄφεςιν λέγων, ὑποβάλλει ἡμῖν νοεῖν, ὡς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν γινομένου, ὅταν κατακυριευθῶμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ, οἷονεὶ δέσμοι τοῦ ἁμαρτίας γινόμενοι. Διὰ μὲν οὖν τὸ κρίμα παρεδόθη τῇ αἰχμαλωσίᾳ, διὰ δὲ τὸν ἔλεον ἀνεκλήθη. [...] τοὺς ἀξίους τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως ἐπὶ τὰ ἐξ ἀρχῆς μετὰ κρίματος σωθῆναι καὶ μετὰ ἑλέους.

ποτε καὶ ἀποκαταστήσει εἰς τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰρήνην, εἰ μὴ ἄρα ἐγγὺς πού ἐστιν ἡ ἀποστασία καὶ τὰ νῦν γινόμενα προσιμία ἐστὶ τῆς εἰσόδου τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου. "Ὅπερ δὲ ἐὰν ᾖ, προσέχου ἵνα ἡ τὰς θλίψεις παρενέγκῃ ἡ ἡμᾶς ἀπταίστους διὰ τῶν θλίψεων ὁ Ἀγαθὸς διασώσῃται.

<sup>245</sup> Here, Gregory argues that the fall caused a limitation of human freedom and insists on the necessity of a liberation from passions and sins, which enslave people to evil. Freedom from passions is the authentic condition of humans, as it was planned by God at the beginning and will be fully recovered in the end, when all have liberated themselves from enslavement to sin, which produces suffering here and punishment in the next world. In this connection, Gregory reinterprets the parable in Matt 18:23–25 and Luke 7:41 in the light of Plato's definition in *Resp.* 617E of virtue as admitting of no masters, and free: "God's right Judgement is applied to all, and extends the time of the restitution of the debt according to its amount [...] the complete eradication of debts does not take place through a money payment, but the debtor is handed to the torturers, until he has paid his whole debt [...] through the necessary suffering, he will eliminate the debt accumulated by means of participation in miserable things, which he had taken upon himself during his earthly life [...] after taking off all that which is alien to himself, i.e. sin, and getting rid of the shame deriving from debts, can achieve a condition of freedom and confidence. Now, freedom is assimilation to what has no master and is endowed with absolute power, and at the beginning it was given us by God, but then it was covered and hidden by the shame of debts. Thus, as a consequence, everything that is free will adapt to what is similar to it; but virtue admits of no masters: therefore, everything that is free will turn out to be in virtue, since what is free has no master. Now, God's nature is the source of all virtue; so, in it there will be those who have attained freedom from evil, that, as the Apostle says, 'God may be all in all.' The τέλος will be the realisation of all humans' freedom, in virtue and in God, when all have rejected sin, and evil has definitely disappeared (*De an.* 101). The assimilation to God, who has no master and is absolutely free, is again presented as a participation in God's image, which was blurred by sin and covered by debts, when the human being became enslaved to sin, but will shine forth again in its purity after being purged from evil (the "restitution of one's debts"). See also my "Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism," 313–356.

Her captivity *will be saved with Judgement and with mercy*. Nothing of the above has been said by the prophet in reference to sense-perceptible enemies or captives; when he calls her liberation “*the restoration of her captivity*,” he has us understand that each of us being under the power of sin, when we are dominated by the enemy, we become, so to say, prisoners of sin. Now, by means of the Judgement one is handed to captivity, but by means of mercy one is *called back*. [...] Those who are made worthy of *restoration to the original condition* are saved by means of Judgement and mercy.

The human being—Basil observes—was deceived by the devil, who operated through a woman (Eve), and was thrown out of its original condition at the beginning, the *arkhē*; and now the devil attempts to prevent humanity from obtaining apokatastasis, which is clearly the opposite of the fall in the *arkhē*, and which, by symmetry, must be located in the *telos* (*Hom. in Lac.* PG 31,1456,21): Δύο γὰρ ἠδίκησε, καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐξέβαλε, καὶ νῦν τὴν ἐπάνοδον διακόπτει. Ἐβάσκησεν σοι τῶν πρώτων ἀγαθῶν διὰ γυναικὸς καὶ πάλιν [...] εἰς τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν κωλύει, the devil “committed an injustice against two humans and chased them out at the beginning, and now he obstructs *their way back*. Out of envy he deprived you of the first goods by means of a woman, and prevents you again *from being restored*.” Basil hypothesises in *Enarr. in Is.* 14,280 that the devil is the only rational creature to whom God does not offer the opportunity to repent, after offering it to him before the creation of the human being, and he admits he is not even sure of this; as Origen often did, he places a *τάχα* at the very beginning of his hypothesis. Therefore, it might be that God will leave the door open even for the conversion of the devil (as Origen and then Gregory of Nyssa thought):

*Τάχα γὰρ πρὸ τοῦ κτισθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον τόπος τις μετανοίας καὶ τῷ διαβόλῳ ὑπελείπετο, καὶ ἐδύνατο ὁ τύφος (εἰ καὶ ἀρχαιότερον ἦν νόσημα) ὅμως διὰ μετανοίας ἑαυτὸν ἐξίασμένον θεραπευθεῖς ἀποκαταστῆσαι αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ ἐξαρχῆς. Ἄφ’ οὗ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου ἡ κατασκευὴ καὶ παραδείσου φυτεία καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐντολὴ Θεοῦ καὶ φθόνος τοῦ διαβόλου καὶ φόνος τοῦ τετιμημένου, ἀπεκλείσθη αὐτῷ καὶ ὁ τόπος τῆς μετανοίας.*

Perhaps, before the creation of the human being, *a chance of repentance and conversion was left open for the devil, too*, and his pride, although it was a more ancient illness, nevertheless *could still be cured, if he had healed himself by means of repentance*, and God could restore him to his original condition. However, after the creation of the world, the planting of the garden of Eden, the introduction of the human being in it, God’s commandment, *the envy/hostility of the devil (to the human being)* and *the killing of the one who was held in honour, maybe the possibility itself of repentance was precluded to him*.

It is also noteworthy that Basil connects apokatastasis to repentance and conversion once again, besides applying to it again the metaphor of therapy and healing. The same notion of apokatastasis as a result of healing, including the most drastic healing, but exclusively in the advantage of the healed, is put forward in *Enarr. in Is.* 7,196, in which God is speaking in the first person:

ὅταν τέμω καὶ ὅταν καυτηριάσω, οὔτε τὴν τομὴν οὔτε τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ καυτήρος ἔλκη ἀτημέλητα καταλείψω. Ἐπειδὴν γὰρ ἀνυσθῇ τοῦτο, δι' ὃ τὰ ἐπίπονα παραλαμβάνεται, τότε τὴν λειπομένην θεραπείαν ἐπαγαγὼν εἰς τὴν ὑγείαν ἀποκαταστήσω.

In case *I cut*, and in case *I cauterise*, *I shall not leave neglected* either the amputation or the wounds of the cauterisation. For, after the *destruction of evil*, because of which such painful treatments are applied, then *I shall administer the rest of the healing* and shall *restore this person to health*.

But one of the most important passages is certainly *Enarr. in Is.* 8,223, in which Basil describes the final apokatastasis as universal:

Αὕτη ἡ ἄγνοια καθέξει τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων· ἀλλ' ὁ νῦν αὐτῆς ἐκζητῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, καὶ ὠδίνων αὐτῆς τὴν εὕρεσιν, ὅψεται ποτε πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον καὶ ἀπολήψεται τὸ τῆς γνώσεως τέλειον, ἐπειδὴν ἐνστῇ ὁ καιρὸς τῆς τῶν ὅλων ἀποκαταστάσεως.

This ignorance will keep prisoner the race of human beings. But whoever now looks for the truth to emerge from ignorance, and struggles with pains to find it, will finally see it face to face, and will attain *the perfection of knowledge*, when there will come *the time of universal apokatastasis*.

The use of the future leaves no doubt concerning the reference to the eventual apokatastasis, in the *telos*. Especially in the last sentence, Basil seems to be reminiscent of Acts 3:21 and to echo Peter's words therein: χρόνοι ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων = καιρὸς τῆς τῶν ὅλων ἀποκαταστάσεως, "the time of universal restoration, the time of the restoration of absolutely all." The final apokatastasis is also associated, once again, with the perfection of knowledge (τὸ τῆς γνώσεως τέλειον), an association that Evagrius, Basil's disciple, will particularly emphasise. How apokatastasis will be made possible is clarified by Basil *ibid.* 13,268, from which it is evident that for Basil, too, just as for Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, the eventual apokatastasis will be a work of God, and specifically of God's *goodness*, that is, God's being the absolute Good. Thus, God will destroy evil and restore his creatures, once they have been purified from all evilness as from a sickness, to the condition that belongs to them by nature:

Ἀγαθοῦ ἔργον ἐστὶ Θεοῦ τὰ φαῦλα ἐξαφανίζειν, ἵνα καθαρὸν ἀπὸ πάσης κακίας τὸ ἑαυτοῦ δημιουργήμα ἀποκαταστήσῃ καὶ ἀπαλλαγὴν ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀρρώστηματος εἰς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαναγάγῃ.



The work that is *proper to God, qua Good*, is to have evil disappear, in order to restore his own creature, once this is purged of every evilness, and to bring it back to its natural condition, once it has been liberated from every illness.

This is an unequivocal description of apokatastasis, moreover joined with the declaration that apokatastasis will depend on God's goodness, a tenet of Origen's soteriology even taken over by Augustine.<sup>246</sup>

In the light of these passages, Basil seems to have had a penchant for the apokatastasis theory, even though he may have refrained to preach it overtly, especially to the simple, for pastoral concerns—provided that the *Regulae* problematic passage is not in fact interpolated, which is likely.

*Macrina and Gregory of Nyssa,  
the Closest and Most Brilliant Followers of Origen*

Τοιοῦτον γένηται πᾶν ὃ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔσχε τὴν γένεσιν,  
οἷον ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἦν, ὅτε οὐπω τὴν κακίαν ἐδέξατο.

Every being that had its origin from God will return  
such as it was from the beginning, when it had not yet  
received evil.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* 14  
Downing)

The eldest of all of Gregory Nyssen's siblings, Macrina the Younger (ca. 327–379), was a Christian philosopher<sup>247</sup> and ascetic, like Origen, whose intellectual heritage formed Macrina through Macrina the Elder. And Macrina formed Gregory of Nyssa in turn,<sup>248</sup> teaching him a form of Christianity that

<sup>246</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on Augustine.

<sup>247</sup> See A.M. Silvas, *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God* (Turnhout, 2008), with sources on Macrina's life and her proto-monastic community at Annisa (now Uluköy in Turkey), where monks and nuns worshipped together in a single church (38–39) and were guided both by Macrina (just as the male and female ascetics who lived close to the tomb of St. Thecla at Seleucia were all led by a deaconess [18–19]). Silvas, who regards Macrina as the Mother of Greek Monasticism and perhaps even Mother of Cenobitic Monasticism, rightly emphasises the philosophical character of her Christianity: "Macrina's piety was far from a type marked by a dominating interest in visions, marvelous phenomena, strained devotions, and religiosity. Nor was she one to foster an emoting self-absorbed 'spirituality' divorced from solid doctrine, moral endeavor, sacred scripture," etc. (168).

<sup>248</sup> This theological formation added itself to Gregory's rhetorical formation—as in the case of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen. Sophronius of Jerusalem († 638), citing Gregory of Nyssa along with Basil among the utmost Patristic authorities, dubbed him ποταμός τῶν λόγων, "river of words/arguments" (*ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 231).

was Origen's Christianity, besides converting almost all of her numerous family to ascetic life. Especially telling are a pithy passage in Gregory's *Ep.* 19 ("We had a sister who was for us a teacher of how to live [sc. a teacher of philosophy], a mother in place of our mother"); his biography of Macrina, in which he, among much else, describes Macrina as responsible for Basil's vocation to "philosophy," that is the ascetic life he took on thanks to her exhortation and guidance; and—the most relevant of all to the present research—Gregory's dialogue *De anima et resurrectione*, in which Macrina forcefully argues for the eventual apokatastasis, presented in close connection with the doctrine of the resurrection.<sup>249</sup> Gregory saw Macrina as a priest.<sup>250</sup> She is to be counted among the Cappadocian Fathers, if one likes as "the Cappadocian Mother." It is through her, and through Macrina the Elder (Macrina's and Gregory's grandmother), that Origen's thought was inherited by the Cappadocians, and most of all precisely by Gregory of Nyssa, who is the most insightful and faithful follower of Origen's *true* thought, in very many respects,<sup>251</sup> and in particular, as far as we are concerned here, in relation to the doctrine of apokatastasis. Macrina Senior was converted to Christianity by Gregory the Wonderworker—the direct disciple of Origen whom I have already treated in this monograph—, as is attested by Basil in *Ep.* 204,6 from 375 CE. In *Ep.* 28 from 368 CE, addressed to the Neocaesarea church, Basil cites the Thaumaturgus with high reverence and admiration.

As for Gregory of Nyssa, he mentions Origen by name twice, in *V. Greg. Thaum.* 13,11 and in *Hom. in Cant.* 13,3, where he refers to Origen's rich and splendid exegesis of the Song of Songs. In both passages Gregory calls Origen "laborious," φιλόπονος—the same characterisation as is repeatedly found in Athanasius. The Byzantine theologian Gobar (sixth century, *ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 232, 291b) attests that "Gregory of Nyssa mentions Origen with admiration [ὁ Νύσσης εὐφρόμως εἰς μνήμην ἄγει, sc. Ὀριγένην]."<sup>252</sup> I have placed Gregory Nyssen at this point for chronological reasons, but I should have

<sup>249</sup> I do not think, as it is often assumed, that Macrina is simply a literary *persona* here and that she never supported the doctrines that Gregory ascribed to her in the dialogue. I suspect that Gregory is rather expounding what he did learn from Macrina, whom he calls his "teacher," his "professor" (διδάσκαλος). See Ramelli, *Gregorio sull'anima*.

<sup>250</sup> See my "Theosebia: A Presbyter of the Catholic Church," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26,2 (2010) 79–102.

<sup>251</sup> I hope to devote a systematic study to the manifold and pervasive influence of Origen on Gregory of Nyssa's thought.

<sup>252</sup> It may be of interest to note that Basil in *Ep.* 58,5 attests that a domestic of his brother Gregory, who delivered Gregory's letters to him, was called Adamantius.

placed him immediately after Origen, because of the strong continuity that obtains between these two Christian philosophers, all the more in respect to the apokatastasis doctrine. This continuity was certainly favoured and made possible by the two Macrinae, the Elder and even more the Younger, who taught Gregory (and very probably her other siblings to whom she was a teacher) this doctrine. Not accidentally, the Origenian Palladius (*HL* 86, PG 34,1188C) describes him in the most laudatory terms: “St. Gregory, the bishop of Nyssa, the wisest, free from passions to the utmost degree, illustrious for the richness of his learning, the brother of bishop Basil, who is honoured like an apostle” (ὁ σοφώτατος καὶ ἀπαθέστατος καὶ πάσῃ παιδείᾳ λάμπων ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Νυσσαεὺς ἐπίσκοπος ἀδελφὸς τοῦ ἐν τιμῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων Βασιλείου τοῦ ἐπισκόπου). Still Eusebius of Thessalonica, in the time of Gregory the Great, included Gregory of Nyssa among the most important Fathers, along with the two other Cappadocians and Gregory the Wonderworker, all of these from the Origenian tradition.<sup>253</sup>

As is the case with Origen, the doctrine of apokatastasis in Gregory of Nyssa is present throughout his production, from the beginning to the end. The works in which it is treated most extensively are probably his *De anima et resurrectione* and *In illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*, which are several years apart from one another.<sup>254</sup> In these works, Gregory also defines the eventual apokatastasis as the culmination and realisation of Christian hope (τέλος τῆς ἐλπίδος). In *De beatitudinibus* PG XLIV 1196,11, Gregory similarly describes it as the apex or summit of Christian hope, ἀκρῶρεια ἐλπίδος. This expression had already been used by Origen in *Fr. in Matth.* 78. Indeed, verbal, exegetical, and philosophical-theological instances of Gregory’s dependence—not slavish, but creative dependence—on Origen are countless.

Gregory’s argument for apokatastasis entirely occupies his exegetical (and probably homiletic<sup>255</sup>) short treatise *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*. In other detailed studies I have demonstrated how in this work Gregory was closely inspired by Origen, not only in his main argument, but also in

<sup>253</sup> *Ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 161, p. 106a B.: ἐκ τῶν λογάδων Πατέρων Ἀθανασίου καὶ τῶν τριῶν Γρηγορίων, τοῦ Θαυματουργοῦ λέγω καὶ τοῦ Θεολόγου καὶ τοῦ θεσπεσίου Νύσσης, Βασιλείου τε τοῦ Καισαρείας καὶ Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου, Κυρίλλου τε τοῦ Ἀλεξανδρείας καὶ τοῦ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Πρόκλου, ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ Μεθοδίου τοῦ ἱερομάρτυρος καὶ Κοδράτου.

<sup>254</sup> See my *Gregorio di Nissa sull' anima*; “Note sulla continuità della dottrina dell’apocatastasi in Gregorio di Nissa: dal *De Anima et Resurrectione* all’*In Illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*,” *Archaeus* 10 (2006) 105–145; “*In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* ... (1 Cor 15,27–28),” 259–274.

<sup>255</sup> If it were a homily, this would be a further proof that Gregory did not hesitate to speak overtly of the eventual apokatastasis even to a general public. The same is indicated by his *Oratio catechetica*, where he even proclaims the salvation of the devil (see below).

minor elements and even exegetical details and quotations, up to precise verbal parallels.<sup>256</sup> Here, therefore, I shall limit myself to recalling very few main points. This treatise focuses on 1Cor 15:28, which is both Origen's and Gregory's favourite Biblical support for the doctrine of apokatastasis. Exactly like Origen, Gregory interprets the final universal submission to Christ as universal salvation. As for Christ, his own eventual submission to God the Father is interpreted by Gregory, just as by Origen,<sup>257</sup> as the submission (and therefore salvation) of all humanity or all *logika*, who constitute the body of Christ. Indeed, both here and in his *Refutation of Eunomius's Profession of Faith* Gregory criticises those "heretics," mainly Neo-"Arians," who used 1Cor 15:28 to demonstrate the Son's subordination to the Father, just as Origen had used it to refute subordinationists whom he labelled "heretics," putting forward the very same argument as Gregory would pick up. Gregory significantly concludes his argument with Origen's very words: "the submission of human beings to God means the salvation of those who have submitted."

Neither Origen nor Gregory have any doubt concerning the universality of this submission-salvation. This conviction of theirs has to do with their main metaphysical pillar for apokatastasis: the eventual vanishing of evil, which Gregory expresses both here in *In Illud* and elsewhere.<sup>258</sup> According to Gregory, just as to Origen, the complete eviction of evil is made possible first of all by Christ. Since Christ is truly God, but also truly human, in Christ "the whole humankind has been made connatural with the divinity." But this means that humanity has been made connatural with the Good to the exclusion of all evil. In Christ, who has no sin, all evil has disappeared from humanity, and death, which came from sin, has disappeared as well, thanks to Christ's resurrection. From him the destruction of evil and the vanishing of death have begun, as Gregory declares. Indeed, since Christ has assumed the whole of humanity, the disappearance of sin and death in one single human has a transitive effect on the rest of humanity. It is from Christ that the glorious advancement of the Good, depicted by Gregory in

<sup>256</sup> Ramelli, "*In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius ...* (1Cor 15,27–28)" and, with further arguments, "The Trinitarian Theology," 445–478.

<sup>257</sup> See my "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism."

<sup>258</sup> See Ramelli, "Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism," and now C. Arruzza, *Les mésaventures de la théodicée. Plotin, Origène, Grégoire de Nysse* (Turnhout, 2011), who rightly stresses how the identification of evil with non-being is common to Gregory, Origen, and Plotinus. But while Plotinus deems evil a necessary product of the ontological procession, Origen and Gregory deem it a product of the freedom of rational creatures and their ontological instability (being in the Good = to be; being in evil = not to be); see my review in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, December 2012 [BMCR 2012.12.31].

his *In Illud*, begins. This advancement, like a march, will take place during Christ's eschatological reign referred to in 1 Cor 15:25–26: Christ will have to reign until all enemies have submitted, while the last, death, will be destroyed.<sup>259</sup> The submission of all enemies means their liberation from evil. This will come to pass gradually, beginning with those who are closest to the Good and ending with those who are farthest removed. Gregory's very insistence on the order with which the eventual restoration will take place is extremely similar to Origen's; both grounded it in Paul's words "each one in his order" in reference to the τέλος (1 Cor 15:23–24). The Good, in its gradual and ordered conquest, will reach even "the extreme limit of evil," having evil disappear completely. In this way, "nothing will remain opposed to the Good," who is God. Then "God's life will extend throughout *all beings*" and will have death utterly vanish. This is exactly what Gregory identifies with "the culmination and realisation of our hope." After the abolition of evil and all πάθη, "the whole lump of human nature, joined to its first fruits, [...] will receive exclusively the dominion of the Good."

Gregory, like Origen, draws a double equation between the body of Christ and the "Church" and between the latter and the whole of humanity, and uses it in *In Illud* in support of his doctrine of apokatastasis. Like Origen, he too in this work links the eventual apokatastasis with the notion of unity. He explains that "all will have God" means that all will be one with God; unification (ἔνωσις) with God will obtain when all will constitute the "body of Christ" after purification and illumination. Not only all humanity, and not only all rational creatures, but even the whole of creation, according to Gregory, will become "one body" and will end up enjoying perfect harmony.<sup>260</sup> Indeed, not even one being in all creation will be lost: μηδὲν ἔξω τῶν σωζομένων, as Gregory forcefully states: "No being will remain outside the number of the saved." This in his *In Illud* (21 Downing) is one of Gregory's clearest expressions of the doctrine of universal salvation. Another one in the same treatise (14 Downing) is but an alternative formulation of the former: "No being created by God will fall outside of the Kingdom of God."

And this will come to pass when all creatures of God will be free from evil in the end, just as they were free at the beginning: "Every being that had its origin from God will return such as it was from the beginning [ἐξ ἀρχῆς], when it had not yet received evil" (*In Illud* 14 Downing). Exactly like Origen,

<sup>259</sup> For this interpretation of v. 26, which is also that of Gregory, see my "1 Cor 15:28."

<sup>260</sup> See my "Harmony between *Arkhe* and *Telos* in Patristic Platonism and the Imagery of Astronomical Harmony Applied to Apokatastasis," *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 7,1 (2013) 1–49.

from 1 Cor 15:28 Gregory deduces that, if God must eventually be "all in all," then evil will no longer exist in any being, because God, the Good, could never be found in evil:

"God will be all in all." In the last sentence Paul with his discourse clearly demonstrates the *ontological non-subsistence of evil* [τὸ τῆς κακίας ἀνύπαρχτον], by saying that God will be *in all*, and that for each one God will be *all*. For it is clear that it will be the case that God is "in all" only when *in the beings it will be impossible to detect any trace of evil*. For it is utterly *unlikely that God may ever be found in evil*. Therefore, either God will not be in all, in case any trace of evil should remain in beings, or else, if it is really necessary to believe that God will be *in all*, along with this conviction the *non-existence of evil* is also demonstrated. *For it is impossible for God to be found in evil.*

(*In Illud*, 17 Downing)

Gregory in his exegetical treatise is taking over Origen's argument almost word for word, especially from *Princ.* 3,6,2–3: "When God becomes 'all in all,' we *cannot admit of evil, lest God be found in evil* [...] And not only in few or in many, but *in all* God will be all, when there will be no longer death, nor death's sting [1 Cor 15:55–56], *nor evil, absolutely. Only then will God really be 'all in all.'*" In Gregory's view, just as in Origen's, evil and death will be utterly annihilated, while all of God's creatures will be saved; their submission will not be slavish subjection, but "sovereignty, incorruptibility, and beatitude." The very same fundamental thesis of *In illud*, which Gregory drew directly from Origen, is repeated, in a condensed form, in *Ref. conf. Eun.* GNO II 396–397: the final subjection of Christ to God is the subjection of all humans—Christ's body—to God, a subjection that will mean their salvation: "The subjection of humans to God is salvation for those who submit in this way, according to the prophet's saying that his soul is subject to God because from God comes salvation through submission." Even all biblical quotations, including that of Ps 61:2, are the same as in *In illud*.

The doctrine of apokatastasis repeatedly emerges in *De anima et resurrectione*, the long dialogue between Gregory and his sister and venerated teacher Macrina that is clearly intended as a Christianisation of Plato's *Phaedo*, and in which Macrina plays the same role as Socrates does in Plato's dialogues.<sup>261</sup> For this is a dialogue on the resurrection—and Gregory, like Origen, entertains a *holistic* concept of "resurrection," involving not only the body but also the soul and the intellect—and the τέλος of the

<sup>261</sup> See at least Ch. Apostolopoulos, *Phaedo Christianus* (Frankfurt, 1986); H. Meissner, *Rhetorik und Theologie: der Dialog Gregors von Nyssa De anima et resurrectione* (Frankfurt, 1991); Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*.

resurrection is precisely the eventual restoration. This is also why the doctrine of apokatastasis is developed more in the second part of the dialogue, the one devoted to the resurrection (the Christian doctrine), than in the first, devoted to the immateriality and immortality of the soul (the Platonic doctrine, thoroughly assimilated in Christian Platonism). However, the notion of apokatastasis as universal salvation is introduced already in the first part, and indeed is a *Leitmotiv* of the whole dialogue. Indeed, already in col. 72B, Macrina, like Origen, regards Phil 2:9–10 as a prediction of the submission-salvation of all rational creatures, angels, humans, and demons, after their purification:

I believe that the divine Apostle [...] meant that *universal harmony of all rational nature* that one day will obtain in the Good [...] when finally, after long cycles of aeons, *evilness has disappeared*, only the Good will remain, and even those creatures [sc. the demons] will *concordantly and unanimously* admit the sovereignty of Christ.<sup>262</sup>

What in *In Illud* will be developed only very briefly in relation to the eventual apokatastasis, in *De anima* obtains a much wider treatment, in this case, too, perfectly in line with Origen's positions: the notion of otherworldly sufferings as purifying rather than retributive. Macrina repeatedly insists on this concept in *De anima*. In cols. 88A–89B, she explains that the soul must necessarily be purified from the “carnal glue.” If this does not happen in the present life, it will have to happen in the next; in this case, after the death of the body, a “second death” will be necessary, which purifies the soul from that “glue” and liberates it from evil, that it may rush toward the Good. This “second death” is not conceived as eternal damnation, but as purification, through suffering, from the “remnants of the fleshly glue.” Likewise, in col. 89B, otherworldly sufferings are described as “future purification.” The souls that have not yet liberated themselves from  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta$  in this life will have to be purified from these in the next. In cols. 97B–105A Macrina determines the reason, measure, and aim of the soul's purification in the aeon to come. In cols. 97B–100C she shows that the primary cause of this purification consists in God's attractive action exerted on a soul, and not God's will to punish it; if a soul is not covered with evil, that attraction can take place without impediment, but if it is, its purification will entail suffering as a side effect.

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<sup>262</sup> I use my edition, *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, which has hopefully improved the Migne edition and is also based on the collation of the Coptic translation (much more ancient than the extant Greek mss.; it has allowed me to restore several readings). I am much looking forward to Ekkehard Mühlenberg's critical edition, which will be the accomplishment of the work undertaken by the late Andreas Spira.

God's intention is not the punishment of the soul, but the re-appropriation (οἰκείωσις) of the soul that was alienated by evil:

Therefore, as it seems, it is not the case that God's judgement has as its main purpose that of bringing about punishment to those who have sinned. On the contrary, as the argument has demonstrated, the divinity on its part does exclusively what is good, separating it from evil, and attracting [sc. the soul] to itself, with a view to its participation in beatitude, but the violent separation of what was united and attached to the soul [sc. evil] is painful for the soul that is attracted and pulled [by the divinity to itself]. (100C)

Far from being eternal damnation, suffering is a side effect of the Godhead's work of attracting the soul back to itself. As Macrina puts it, "it seems to me that the soul too must suffer whenever the divine power, out of love for humanity, *extracts for itself what belongs to it* from the ruins of irrationality and materiality. For it is neither out of hatred nor for punishment of an evil life, in my view, that those who have sinned are inflicted suffering by the One who *claims for itself and drags to itself* all that which has come to being thanks to it and for it, but the Godhead, for its part, as its principal and better purpose *attracts the soul to itself*, i.e. the source of every beatitude; however, as a side effect, there occurs necessarily the aforementioned suffering for the one who is pulled in that way." Here apokatastasis is read as the supreme act of *oikeiōsis* on the part of the Godhead, who re-appropriates what belongs to itself.<sup>263</sup> The more a soul is immersed in sin and misses its "flesh," the more painful will this process of attraction be; besides the example of one who is extracted from a mass of ruins, another one, which was dear to Origen, is that of gold that must be burnt in purifying fire, καθαρίσιον πῦρ,<sup>264</sup> along with the impurities, that it may be purified from these (*De an.* 100A); the more the impurities are, the longer will the fire endure (97B–101A). "The amount of evilness present in each one is the measure of the suffering [...] that painful flame will be applied for shorter or longer, depending on the amount of matter, until there continues to exist what aliments it" (*De an.* 100

<sup>263</sup> A study of mine on this concept in Gregory is forthcoming. A systematic analysis of Origen's Christianisation of the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiōsis* is also being prepared; against this background it is possible to assess both the indebtedness and the originality of Gregory in respect to Origen on this score. Gregory conceives of apokatastasis as the *oikeiōsis* of all rational creatures to their *prōton oikeion*, who is God, and as God's supreme act of *oikeiōsis*. Resurrection also is the *oikeiōsis* of the soul, which re-appropriates the dispersed elements of its own body, just as the divinity re-appropriates the dispersed souls that belong to it in the restoration.

<sup>264</sup> This according to Ramelli's and Oehler's editions; not according to Migne's edition, which adopts a marginal gloss instead.



CD–101A [448 Ramelli]). This is the same example as is used by Gregory in *In Illud* 13,22–14,7 Downing (“when all the evilness that had got mixed with the beings, like a sort of impurity, has been consumed by the fusion of the purifying fire ...” καθαύρσιον πῦρ), and in other passages of *De anima* as well, e.g. 157D–E (516 Ramelli): what is handed to the otherworldly (αἰώνιον) fire is what is contrary to the soul’s nature, i.e., evil, which must be destroyed; then the fire will cease to burn. This idea was dear to Origen, for instance in *Princ.* 2,10,6 and *Hom. in Ier.* 16,6.

Macrina insists that the aim of the whole cathartic process is the uttermost annihilation of sin and evil (*De an.* 100–105A). She grounds her argument in Scripture, the norm or canon (κανών) of Christian philosophy. The Gospel stresses the necessity of purification, which must be commensurate with the amount of evil/impurity accumulated by each one (Matt 18:23–25; Luke 7:41); the very idea of measure excludes that of an infinite duration. For all souls, the aim of this purification is virtue and (on the basis of 1 Cor 15:28) assimilation to the divinity, an ideal that was already rooted in Platonism:

*Evil must necessarily be eliminated, absolutely and in every respect, once and for all, from all that is, and, since in fact it is not [...], neither will it have to exist, at all. For, as evil does not exist in its nature outside will, once each will has come to be in God, evil will be reduced to complete disappearance, because no receptacle will be left for it [...] God’s right judgement is applied to all, and extends the time of the restitution of the debt according to its amount [...] the complete eradication of debts does not take place through any money payment, but the debtor is handed to the torturers, until he has paid his whole debt [...] Everything that is free will turn out to be in virtue, since what is free has no master. Now, God’s nature is the source of all virtue; so, in it there will be those who have attained freedom from evil, that, as the Apostle says, “God may be all in all.” God will be both all and in all. God’s nature will become all to us and will take the place of all, distributing itself in a way that will be suitable to the needs of that life. And from divine revelation it is clear that God, for those who deserve it, is place, house, garment, food, drink, light, richness, kingdom, and whatever it is possible to think and express among those things that contribute to a good life for us. Well, he who is “all” also is “in all.” And in this it seems to me that Scripture teaches the complete disappearance of evil. For, if in all beings there will be God, clearly in them there will be no evil.*

(*De an.* 101–104)

The last three periods of the block quotation are again a clear echo of Origen’s deduction of the eventual disappearance of evil from 1 Cor 15:28. The notion that punishment must be commensurate with one’s deeds in the present life (ἐπαξίως τῶν βεβιωμένων) is recurrent in Gregory<sup>265</sup> and comes

<sup>265</sup> E.g. *CE* 3,3,36; *De inf.* 73; *V. Greg. Thaum.* PG 46,904,51.

directly from Origen (κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν τῶν βεβιωμένων, *Fr. in Ps.* 74,8). The initial, strong assertion that evil must be absolutely eliminated echoes Origen's analogous claims, e.g. in *Hom. in Jer.* 1,15: "evil must subsist absolutely nowhere, in no respect" (δεῖ μηδαμῶς συνεστάναι).

In this connection, Macrina comforts those who fear death and otherworldly torments: the τέλος of every soul is its infinite progress in the assimilation to God, in an infinitely increasing participation in the divine Good-God (*De an.* 105AD), who is infinite (97A); this is a tensional ideal that owes much to Origen.<sup>266</sup> Suffering in purification is but a necessary way to achieve this. In *De an.* 157BD, Macrina warns that purification for sinners will be severe, but she is also clear that this purification from sins and passions in fire (160C) will bring about their eventual salvation. God's image will be restored in its pureness in all of them. Macrina's pastoral exhortation to avoid sin as much as possible in order to avoid suffering, or at least a long suffering, is analogous to Origen's recommendation, for instance in *Dial. Heracl.* 10: it is necessary to endeavour to avoid even the smallest sins, because even these exclude people from God's Kingdom. In the section devoted to him, I have mentioned Origen's pastoral concern with respect to the divulgation of the theory of universal salvation among immature people who need the threat of punishment to avoid evil.

This is also expounded by means of the exegesis of the parable of Dives and Lazarus in *De an.* 81A–84D. Macrina clarifies its spiritual meaning: the human being was originally untouched by evil, but the gift of free will it received from God allowed for its choice of evil; divine providence then divided human life into two: the earthly and the eternal. Humans should choose the true good in the future life, and not apparent goods in the present life, otherwise they will need purification by fire in the other world (such as Dives' purifying suffering). Spiritual interpretations are provided for the "huge chasm" between Dives and Lazarus after death, for "Abraham's bosom," for the flame of hell, for the drop of water from Paradise, and for the bodily limbs mentioned in the parable, while Dives and Lazarus have no body after their death and before the resurrection.<sup>267</sup> Macrina interprets

<sup>266</sup> See my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, introductory essay with argument and documentation.

<sup>267</sup> "Scripture presents this exposition in a form that refers to the body, but spreads in, here and there, many hints by which whoever is able to understand accurately is driven to a *subtler interpretation*. This [...] detaches the reader [...] from the literal meaning [...] For, what eyes can Dives raise in Hades, if he left in the grave those of his body? And how can the incorporeal perceive a flame? What tongue can he wish to have refreshed by a drop of water, given that he does not own the corporeal one? [...] For, since the bodies are in the

Luke 16:27–31 as a warning that the soul must be purified from the “fleshly glue”—if not yet in this life, then in the next—to be free in that “race toward the Good” that each soul, sooner or later, will perform (*De an.* 85B–88C). Gregory was inspired by Origen, with his spiritual exegesis of the fire of hell in *Princ.* 2,10,4–5 and his exegesis of the Dives and Lazarus parable in his lost *De resurrectione*: “concerning Lazarus and Dives one can doubt; the simplest believe that the details of the parable have been said in the sense that both Dives and Lazarus, still endowed with their bodies, are receiving what their deeds in this life have deserved; those who are more precise think that, since after the resurrection no one is left in biological life, the facts described in the parable do not take place in the resurrection [...] and therefore they investigate the meaning of the tongue, the finger, Abraham’s bosom [...] But the rich who is punished and the poor who rests in Abraham’s bosom, it is before the return of the Saviour and the end of the world, and therefore *before the resurrection*, that they are said, the former to be punished in hell, and the latter to rest in Abraham’s bosom” (*ap. Method. De res. ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 234, p. 301a).

In cols. 132C–136A Macrina—mindful of Origen’s allegorisation of the eschatological heavenly feasts—reads the Feast of Tabernacles in Ps 117:27 as an allegory of the eventual universal apokatastasis: all rational creatures will enjoy harmony and unity after the disappearance of evil. In col. 133D the access to the Temple is allegorised as all *logika*’s access to the eventual restoration, which comes from knowledge and voluntary adhesion to God. Indeed, the whole topography of the Temple indicates an intellectual geography where the angels are the “horns of the altar” around which the eschatological feast is celebrated.

The human race, because of vice implanted in it, was banished from God’s enclosure, but, once purified by the lustral bath, *can enter it again*. And since these enclosures that interpose themselves, through which vice separated us from the internal part situated beyond the veil, are *destined to be demolished* once and for all, when, thanks to resurrection, our nature will be reconstituted as a tent that is planted, and all corruption ingenerated because of vice will

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graves, while the soul is neither in a body nor constituted by parts, it would be impossible to adapt the structure of the narration, in its immediate meaning, to truth, unless we refer, with a metaphor or transposition, each detail to the *intelligible interpretation* [...] When Scripture mentions the finger, eye, tongue [...] after the dissolution of the composite body, it refers to the soul [...] it will be reasonable to think that *hell (Hades) is not a place* called so, but a condition of invisible and incorporeal existence, where the soul lives,” according to Origen’s etymology of ᾍδης from ἀειδής, accepted also by Methodius (*De res. ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 234, p. 299a).

disappear from beings, then *God's feast will be prepared* by all, who will have been consolidated again and restructured by means of resurrection, so that *all will take part in one and the same joy*, and there will be no more difference to divide the rational nature in its participation in goods that are the *same for all*, but *those who now are excluded due to vice will be finally able to enter the recesses of divine beatitude*. (133D)

Phil 2:10 is introduced, here too, in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis (col. 136A). This Scriptural quotation was very dear to Origen, too, and appears in all periods of Gregory's literary production. Macrina explains here that St. Paul in this passage prophesied the eventual "universal harmony with the Good," which will obtain in the final apokatastasis.

The strong link between *anastasis* and *apokatastasis*, resurrection and restoration, is illustrated by Macrina in cols. 145C–149B. Its very basis is the definition of the resurrection itself as the restoration or reconstitution (*ἀποκατάστασις*) of human nature to its original condition. This definition is a recurrent motif in Gregory's works. For instance, it is also found in a homiletic context, *Hom. in Eccl.* GNO V 296,16–18: "Resurrection is nothing else but the complete restoration to the original condition [*πάντως ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκατάστασις*]." The same equation between *anastasis* and *apokatastasis* is drawn by Gregory in a number of other places, for instance *De mort.* GNO IX 51,16 ff., *Hom. op.* 17,2, *Or. in Pulch.* GNO IX 472, and *De or. dom.* PG 44,1148C. This ubiquitous presence is certainly intentional; it cannot be regarded as a proof that Gregory mixed up the notions of resurrection and restoration, or that he wanted to "reduce" apokatastasis to the resurrection of the body (more on this misunderstanding below, in a brief discussion of recent scholarship). Gregory entertains a holistic notion of resurrection, which involves not only the restoration of the body to its original condition prior to the fall, but also the restoration of the soul and intellect of each human being to its integrity before sin. This is a whole process that starts with the resurrection of the body and continues with purification and illumination of the soul and intellect if need be. This is clear from *De anima*. The resurrection of the body is the beginning of the restoration; for some, who are already pure, it is also the end, since their restoration will be completed at once; for others there will be a long process before the completion of their restoration. *Anastasis* coincides with *apokatastasis* if it is understood holistically. The resurrection of soul and intellect may actually be achieved in some cases after a long purification, but it will be achieved for all; there is no doubt that for Gregory the resurrection will involve all humanity. In his definition of the resurrection as a restoration Gregory is, once again, following in the footsteps of Origen, who used *ἀποκατάστασις* in reference to the

resurrection, for example of Christ (*Comm. in Io.* 20,11) or even of Lazarus (*ibid.* 28,6). It is clearly by Origen that Methodius was inspired when he called the resurrection of all Christians ἀποκατάστασις (*De res.* 3,2). What is more, Origen explicitly defined apokatastasis as the perfection of the resurrection: τὸ τέλειον τῆς ἀναστάσεως (*Comm. in Io.* 10,37). This idea was taken over and elaborated by Gregory. This is why in *De mort.* 59–60 he speaks of the resurrection of the body and the restoration of the soul in a perfectly parallel way: “Do not blame the *body* for its indecorous parts, because after this, thanks to the regeneration [παλιγγενεσία], the *soul* will be *reconstituted* to a more divine condition, and will be made beautiful by being purified from superfluous and useless parts for the enjoyment of the future life.”

Resurrection is thus the restoration of human nature to its original condition, prior to the emergence of evil, as Macrina explains. But the original condition of humanity, as was planned and created by God ἐξ ἀρχῆς, was free from evil, from all suffering, and from bodily decay and death; “human nature was something divine, before the human being acquired the impulse toward evil” (*De an.* 148A). And in the τέλος it will return to being so, in accord with the principle of similarity (but not identity!) between the ἀρχή and the τέλος that was a pillar of Origen’s thought and was embraced by Gregory as well. The body will remain, but it will be made glorious and freed from secondary aspects such as the division into genders, which is accessory and not ontologically intrinsic to the human being. It was provided only because of the fall, but it cannot exist in the image of God. This conviction, which is also expressed in *De hominis opificio*, will remain unchanged in Gregory up to his last work (Homily 7 on the Song of Songs).<sup>268</sup> Macrina, interpreting 1 Cor 15:35–38, remarks that the omnipotent God not only gives back to each human being its body, which had been dissolved, but bestows on human nature “a more magnificent constitution” (*De an.* 153C), the “spiritual body” of 1 Cor 15:44. That incorruptible and glorious body (see 1 Cor 15:52), free from πάθη, will no longer be a cause of sin; thus, it will no longer prevent the soul from remaining in the Good. This is apokatastasis.

Indeed, as Macrina claims, the aim that God intends to pursue with the resurrection is apokatastasis, the restoration of all humans—and indeed all

<sup>268</sup> “God is neither male nor female: how could one think of anything of this kind concerning the divine nature, while not even for us humans this characteristic endures forever, but, when we are one in Christ, we shall put off the signs of this physical difference, together with the whole “old human being”? [...] If we call God “Mother” or “Love,” we shall not err: for God is Love, as John said” (1 John 4:8).

rational beings and all creatures of God—to a state of original perfection with a view to their infinite spiritual development. Those who have pursued virtue in this life will rise immediately in a perfect state; those who have not will still need purification after their resurrection. God will eliminate from them all that is spurious and alien to their nature, that is, sin and evil:

(sinners too will) finally recover, after long periods of time, the common form that was conferred by God to us from the beginning [...] after the purification and vanishing of these passions thanks to (God's) solicit and much needed care, with the therapy of fire, instead of those defects there will appear their positive counterparts: incorruptibility, life, force, grace, glory, and every other similar prerogative that we conjecture can be contemplated in the Godhead itself and in its image, human nature. (157C–160C)

These, pronounced by Macrina, are the concluding words of the whole *De anima*. But the doctrine of universal restoration, which Gregory is very likely to have absorbed from his venerated ascetic sister and his main inspirer, Origen, is proclaimed in many other works, from the earliest to the latest stages of his production, and in disparate literary genres: from the dialogue (*De anima*) to the exegetical treatise/homily (*In Illud* and *Homilies on the Song of Songs*), from the “catechetical handbook” (*Oratio catechetica*) to consolatory literature (*De infantibus*) and other works as well.

Indeed, Gregory includes the doctrine of apokatastasis among the basic Christian teachings, which catechists should impart to all those who are instructed by them in the Christian faith, in his *Oratio catechetica*. The most significant passage here is undoubtedly ch. 26, 64–67 Mühlenberg, where universal apokatastasis is affirmed, including that of the devil. This is made possible by the otherworldly purification of creatures, as in *De anima*, but in turn the effectiveness of this purification is very clearly made dependent on Christ's incarnation—something also suggested in *In Illud*, as I mentioned. Gregory is arguing that God's salvific plan keeps divine justice and goodness together (the same theodicy as Origen supported against Marcionites and “Gnostics,” developing his doctrine of apokatastasis):

It is proper to the just to distribute things to each one in accord with his or her merits, and it is proper to the wise neither to subvert justice nor to separate *the good purpose inspired by love for humanity* from *the Judgement according to justice*, but to join both these elements together in a fitting way, rendering to justice what it deserves, without parting from the goodness of the purpose inspired by love for humanity.

Let us now consider whether these two elements can be detected in what has happened [sc. in Christ's deception of the devil]. The rendering of what one has deserved, through which the deceiver [sc. the devil] is deceived in turn, shows God's *justice*; the purpose of the fact is a proof of the *goodness* of

its agent. For it is typical of justice to render to each one those things whose principles and causes one has initially provided as a foundation, just as the earth produces fruits according to the kind of seeds that have been sown into it. And it is typical of wisdom not to fall down from the Good in the modality of rendering similar things for similar things. Take the following example: both a venom, which assaults a person, and a medication, which heals the victim of the assault, mix with food in the same way, but the former is deleterious, whereas the latter is a help against the deleterious effects of the other. And yet, the modality of the therapy does not mar the purpose of the good deed; for, although in both cases a mixing takes place between the substance, poison or medicine, and the food, however, we look at their respective purposes, and therefore we praise the one and get indignant at the other. In the same way, also here, from the point of view of justice, the deceiver [sc. the devil] receives in exchange those things whose seeds he has sown by means of his own free choice. For he is deceived in turn by [Christ's] human appearance, he who first *deceived* the human being with the seduction of pleasure. But the purpose of what has happened manifests a difference for the better: the devil plotted his deception aiming at the destruction of human nature, while Christ, who is just, good, and wise at the same time, used the intention of deception aiming at the *salvation* of the destroyed. In this way, *he benefited not only the one who had perished* [sc. the human being], *but also the one who had perpetrated that ruin against us* [sc. the devil]. For, when death is approached by life, darkness by light, and corruption by incorruptibility, there occurs the *disappearance of the worse element and its passage into non-being* [τὸ μὴ εἶναι]. This is *beneficial to the one who is purified* from those worse elements. Take, again, the following example. When a less valuable matter has got mixed with gold, the workers, thanks to the consuming action of fire, destroy what is alien to gold and must be rejected, and bring back the more precious matter to its natural splendour. The separation of the two matters, however, does not take place without pain: over time, the fire, thanks to its destructive power, has the spurious substance disappear, while it is a kind of *therapy for the gold* that what is over it and spoils its beauty is fused by that fire. Now, in the same way, the approach of the *divine power, like fire*, to death, corruption, darkness, and whatever product of evilness<sup>269</sup> had grown upon the inventor of evil [sc. the devil], produced the *disappearance of what is against nature* and therefore benefited the nature itself [sc. of the devil as created substance] with the purification, although the above-mentioned separation is painful. Indeed, not even the adversary himself would doubt that what has happened is *both just and salvific* [δικαιόν τε καὶ σωτήριον], in consideration of the benefit produced. Let me now explain this benefit with another simile. Those who are amputated and cauterised for *therapeutic* reasons become angry with their healers, exasperated as they are by the pain of the wound. But if health returns thanks to these treatments, and the suffering caused by cauterisation disappears, they will be grateful to those who have applied that therapy to

<sup>269</sup> I emend the reading ἔγγονον, kept by Mühlenberg, into ἐγγόνου.

them. Likewise, once, after the revolving of long ages [μακραὶ περίοδοι], *evil has been wiped out from nature*, while now it is completely mixed and confused with it, when there will be *the restoration of those who now lie in evilness into their original state* [ἢ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκατάστασις τῶν νῦν ἐν κακίᾳ κειμένων], *a unanimous thanksgiving will be elevated by all creation*, both those who have been punished in purification and those who needed not even a beginning of purification.

*These and such things are made possible by the great Mystery of the inhumanation of God* [τὸ μέγα μυστήριον τῆς θείας ἐνανθρωπήσεως]. For, thanks to all the respects in which Christ has mixed with humanity, having passed through all that is proper to human nature, birth, nourishment, growth, and having even gone as far as the trial of death, he has accomplished all the tasks I have mentioned, *both liberating the human being from evilness* [τόν τε ἄνθρωπον τῆς κακίας ἐλεύθερον] and *healing even the inventor of evilness* [καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν τῆς κακίας εὐρετὴν ἰώμενος] (sc. the devil). For the purification from the illness, as painful as it may be, is the *definitive healing of the sickness*.

The example of the purifying action of fire occurs here, too, as an allegory of the purification that will lead to apokatastasis, which is also described in terms of unity and harmony of all creation, which, liberated from evil, will give thanks to God. Gregory foresees two cases: some, having been already purified on earth, will need no purification in the other world; others will be purified in the next world. *Tertium non datur*: the case of creatures who will never achieve purification is not contemplated by Gregory. Here, moreover, the role of Christ in apokatastasis is made clear. It is Christ who heals (as *Christus medicus*, a theme dear to Clement and Origen) and purifies off all evil both from humanity—thanks to his “inhumanation,” as is also explained in *In Illud*—and from the devil himself, who was “the inventor of evil.” The apokatastasis made possible by Christ is so universal that it will extend even to the devil, whose purification is “both just and salvific.”

The theme of the deception of the devil, to which Gregory refers in this passage, is central to his understanding of the original sin: in his Socratic-Platonic ethical intellectualism, sin is the result of a wrong choice which depends on a wrong judgement; it is ultimately due to ignorance.<sup>270</sup> The protoplasts did what they did, which was evil, because it looked good, and it looked good because they were deceived by the devil. Indeed, in *Hom. op.* 20, the very name of the forbidden tree, “of the knowledge of good and evil,” is said to express the double nature of the fruit: “it *seems* to be good [καλὸν εἶναι δοκεῖ], but, in that it causes the ruin of those who taste it, it turns out

<sup>270</sup> On ethical intellectualism in Gregory and the Cappadocians in general, see B. Otis, “Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958) 95–124.



to be the culmination of all evil,” κακοῦ παντὸς ἔσχατον. The devil’s deception is described in *Or. cat.* GNO III/4, 26,3–5: “the adversary, having mingled evilness [κακία] to the human faculty of choice [προαίρεσις], produced an *obfuscation* and *darkening* of the capacity for reasoning well [εὐλογία].” Sin comes from an obfuscation of the intellect. Indeed, for Gregory the demons’ main work of temptation consists precisely in deception (ἡ ἀπατηλὴ τῶν δαιμόνων), in giving to evil an appearance of good (*C. fatum* GNO III,2, 59,6–12), in deceiving human beings through oracles, divination, and the like (*ibid.* 59,15–16), and in having humans judge in a superficial way, without a proper exercise of free will (*V. Greg. Thaum.* PG 46, 937,30). Freedom, for Gregory just as for Origen, is freedom to choose the Good; the choice of evil, which is a consequence of a wrong judgement and an obnubilated mind, denotes a *lack* of freedom.

It might seem that stressing the deception operated by the devil—who is thus rightly deceived by the merely human appearance of Jesus, as Clement had emphasised in *Strom.* 6,140,3 (ἀριθμούμενος μὲν ὡς ἄνθρωπος, κρυπτόμενος δὲ ὅς ἦν)—is just a way to remove the problem of the “original sin” one step backward, so to relieve the human being from a responsibility that is rather assigned to the devil. But Gregory adds that Christ saved *both* the human being *and* the devil, through the purification from what is alien to their nature, that is, evil. The creatures themselves will thus be restored to God. Gregory follows Origen in theorising the salvation of the devil, not as enemy and evil, but as a creature that, once healed, voluntarily converts to God. Origen in *Princ.* 3,6,5 provides the background for Gregory’s previsions concerning the devil in *Or. Cat.* 26. Here, too, it is only through Christ’s healing that the devil and all sinning rational creatures can be restored:

Propterea namque etiam nouissimus inimicus, qui mors appellatur, destrui dicitur, ut neque ultra triste sit aliquid, ubi mors non est, neque diuersum sit, ubi non est inimicus. Destrui sane nouissimus inimicus ita intellegendum est, non ut *substantia* eius quae a Deo facta est pereat, sed ut propositum et *uoluntas* inimica, quae non a Deo sed ab ipso processit, intereat. Destruetur ergo, non ut non sit, sed ut inimicus et mors non sit. *Nihil enim Omnipotenti impossibile est, nec insanabile est aliquid Factori suo.*

The devil, as the inventor of evil, is identified by Origen with the “last enemy” mentioned in 1 Cor 15:26, which in *Comm. in Rom.* 5,7 he glossed as *mors animae*. The devil is saved, for both Origen and Gregory, not as a personification of evil, but as a creature of God healed by Christ from that evil of which he was the initiator (out of envy, φθόνος, both for Gregory, *Or. cat.* GNO III/4, 25,10 ff., and for Origen, *Or.* 19,3). Origen, stating that no one is “incurable” for Christ, since Christ is also the one who has created every creature

and thus can heal all of them (*Princ.* 3,6,5), was correcting Plato, according to whom some who have done too much evil are “incurable” (ἀνίατοι), and therefore their souls cannot be healed through suffering and restored to the contemplation of the Ideas, but must remain in Tartarus forever. Indeed, the idea of people who are ἀνίατοι both on earth and in hell occurs frequently in Plato. Origen probably had in mind three famous passages from Plato’s descriptions of otherworldly punishments in *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, and *Republic*. In *Phaed.* 113E2 Plato states that those who are incurable because of the gravity of their sins are destined to Tartarus, from where they will never go out.<sup>271</sup> In *Gorg.* 525C2 Plato, after remarking that only through suffering is it possible to get rid of evil, observes that those who committed extremely serious sins have become incurable, and their torments, which are expressly described as eternal, do not produce their purification, but are simply retributive and useful for other people, as a paradigm.<sup>272</sup> And in *Resp.* 615E3 Plato repeats that tyrants—the worst kind of sinners in his view—and private citizens who had committed serious sins are incurable and are never allowed to leave their place of punishment.<sup>273</sup> Indeed, sin is repeatedly presented by Plato as an illness of the soul that may become incurable,<sup>274</sup> also in contexts in which he is speaking of human justice.<sup>275</sup> Origen, followed by Gregory, corrects Plato on this point, claiming that no being is incurable for its creator, not even the devil. Even though he is a tendentious witness, Theophilus of Alexandria caught well that the salvation of the devil

<sup>271</sup> Οἱ δ' ἂν δόξωσιν ἀνιάτως ἔχειν διὰ τὰ μεγέθη τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων [...] τούτους δὲ ἡ προσήκουσα μοῖρα ρίπτει εἰς τὸν Τάρταρον, ὅθεν οὐποτε ἐκβαίνουσιν.

<sup>272</sup> Δι' ἀλγηδόνων καὶ ὀδυνῶν γίνεταί αὐτοῖς ἡ ὠφελία καὶ ἐνθάδε καὶ ἐν Ἄϊδου· οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ἄλλως ἀδικίας ἀπαλλάττεσθαι. οἱ δ' ἂν τὰ ἔσχατα ἀδικήσωσι καὶ διὰ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀδικήματα ἀνίατοι γένωνται, ἐκ τούτων τὰ παραδείγματα γίνεταί, καὶ οὗτοι αὐτοὶ μὲν οὐκέτι ὀνίανται οὐδέν, ἅτε ἀνίατοι ὄντες, ἄλλοι δὲ ὀνίανται οἱ τούτους ὁρῶντες διὰ τὰς ἀμαρτίας τὰ μέγιστα καὶ ὀδυνηρότατα καὶ φοβερώτατα πάθη πάσχοντας τὸν αἰὲ χρόνον.

<sup>273</sup> Τοὺς πλείστους τυράννους· ἦσαν δὲ καὶ ἰδιῶται τινες τῶν μεγάλα ἡμαρτηκώτων [...] ἀνιάτως ἔχόντων.

<sup>274</sup> See, e.g., *Gorg.* 480B2: παρὰ τὸν δικαστὴν ὥσπερ παρὰ τὸν ἱατρὸν, σπεύδοντα ὅπως μὴ ἐγχερονισθὲν τὸ νόσημα τῆς ἀδικίας ὑπουλον τὴν ψυχὴν ποιήσει καὶ ἀνίατον; 512A7: εἰ δέ τις ἄρα ἐν [...] τῇ ψυχῇ πολλὰ νοσήματα ἔχει καὶ ἀνίατα, τούτῳ δὲ βιωτέον ἐστὶν καὶ τοῦτον ὀνήσει, ἅντε ἐκ θαλάττης ἅντε ἐκ δικαστηρίου ἕαντε ἄλλοθεν ὁποθενοῦν σῶσθαι, ἀλλ' οἶδεν ὅτι οὐκ ἄμεινόν ἐστιν ζῆν τῷ μοχθηρῷ ἀνθρώπῳ· κακῶς γὰρ ἀνάγκη ἐστὶν ζῆν.

<sup>275</sup> Such as *Prot.* 325A8: ὡς ἀνίατον ὄντα τοῦτον ἐκβάλλειν ἐκ τῶν πόλεων ἢ ἀποκτείνειν; *Resp.* 410A3: τοὺς μὲν εὐφρεῖς τὰ σώματα καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς θεραπεύουσιν, τοὺς δὲ μὴ, ὅσοι μὲν κατὰ σώματα τοιοῦτοι, ἀποθνήσκουσιν ἐάσουσιν, τοὺς δὲ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν κακοφρεῖς καὶ ἀνιάτους αὐτοὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν; *Leg.* 735E3: τοὺς γὰρ μέγιστα ἐξημαρτηκότας, ἀνιάτους δὲ ὄντας, μεγίστην δὲ οὖσαν βλάβην πόλεως, ἀπαλλάττειν εἰωθεν; 731B5: τὸ παράπαν ἀνίατα ἀδικήματα οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλως ἐκφυγεῖν ἢ μαχόμενον καὶ ἀμυνόμενον νικῶντα καὶ τῷ μηδὲν ἀνιέναι κολάζοντα.

for Origen—just as for Gregory—passes through his healing, that is, his liberation from sin: τὸν διάβολον [...] φάμενος πάσης ἀμαρτίας ἐλευθερούμενον ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχαίαν ἀναδραμεῖσθαι τιμὴν (*Ep. Pasch.* 16 fr.).<sup>276</sup>

Both from *In Illud* and from the passage of *Or. cat.* 26 quoted above, as well as from others, it clearly emerges that for Gregory, just as for Origen, the doctrine of apokatastasis is a Christological, and indeed Christocentric, doctrine. In their view, it is a specifically *Christian* doctrine. This is also why Origen was at such pains to distinguish his own, Christian notion of apokatastasis from the Stoic. Both in Origen's and in Gregory's view, universal apokatastasis is made possible, not by any metaphysical or cosmological necessity, but by Christ's inhumanation, sacrifice, and resurrection, and by the grace of God. The very fact that for both Origen and Gregory the eventual universal restoration begins with, and coincides with a holistic vision of, the *resurrection* makes it clear that their concept of apokatastasis is thoroughly *Christian*, given the Christian—and not “pagan” or “Platonic”—roots of the doctrine of the resurrection. Moreover, it is certainly the case that Origen's and Gregory's main metaphysical pillar for the eventual universal restoration, namely the ontological non-subsistence of evil and its final vanishing, was also a metaphysical tenet of Platonism, and they both very probably deemed it a tenet of Christian Platonism as well, but they also found it in the Bible, especially in 1Cor 15:23–28, and indeed they grounded it in the authority of Scripture, and not in that of Plato or Plotinus.<sup>277</sup> It must also be remembered that in their view—which is indebted to Hellenistic Jewish apologetics from Aristobulus onwards and Christian apologetics from Justin, Tatian and Clement onwards—Plato of course agreed with the Bible, in that he was inspired by either the Bible itself or the very author of the Bible, God's Logos. This should always be borne in mind when speaking of Christian Platonism.

That evil must eventually disappear in the most radical way, in accord with its ontological non-subsistence, is repeatedly declared by Gregory, just as by Origen before and Evagrius after him. I have already highlighted this idea in *De anima*, *In illud*, and *Oratio catechetica*. But these are not, by far, the

<sup>276</sup> The same is confirmed by Jerome in *Comm. in Dan.* 3: *Quidam pessime ad diabolum referunt quod in consummatione et fine mundi etiam ipse recipiat notitiam Dei et omnes ad poenitentiam cohortetur, et hunc uolunt esse regem Ninive, qui nouissime descendit de throno superbiae et humilitatis praemia consequutus sit.*

<sup>277</sup> See my “Origen and the Apokatastasis: A Reassessment,” in *Origeniana Decima*, eds. S. Kaczmarek–H. Pietras, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 244 (Leuven, 2011), 649–670.

only works where Gregory insists on it. Another work in which the theme of apokatastasis is prominent, *In Inscriptiones Psalmorum*, contains passages that are very clear on this score, especially GNO V 100,25 and 101,3. Here Gregory proclaims that evil is not *ab aeterno* in the absolute sense, ἐξ αἰδίου (only God is, according to him and to Origen), and therefore it will not subsist *in aeternum*:

The Lord's succour has not allowed us to continue to be inhabitants of hell, also because, in proportion to the amount of suffering deriving from sin, we have received the *therapy from the Physician*. And here he expounds an even greater philosophical truth, by asserting as a dogma that *evil is not ab aeterno* [ἐξ αἰδίου] [...] Therefore, it has been demonstrated that *evil is not ab aeterno* [ἐξ αἰδίου] and will *not subsist forever* [εἰς αἰεί]. For what does not exist always [αἰεί] will not exist forever [εἰς αἰεί] either.

Indeed, soon after Gregory speaks of "complete elimination of evil," ἀναίρεσις τοῦ καχοῦ. This does not simply derive from a metaphysical necessity, given evil's ontological negativity, but from Christ's action (the same as in *In illud*, where it is the inhumanation of Christ that liberates humanity from evil). Gregory confers again a strong Christological foundation to his apokatastasis doctrine.

Since evil has no ontological subsistence, as opposed to God, the only true Good and true Being, to be found in evil is tantamount to non being: "Being in evil properly means *non being*, since evil itself has *no ontological subsistence* of its own; what originates evil, indeed, is rather a *lack of Good*" (*In inscr.* Ps. GNO III/2, 62–63). This is also what was maintained by Bardaisan,<sup>278</sup> who, not accidentally, was a Middle Platonist and a supporter of the apokatastasis doctrine. At the end of the *Liber legum regionum*, 611 Nau, he declares: "But whenever God likes, everything can be, with no obstacle at all. Indeed, there is nothing that can impede that great and holy will. For, even those who are convinced to resist God, *do not do so in force*, but they are *in evil and error*, and this can be *only for a short time*, because God is kind and gentle, and allows all natures to remain in the state in which they are and govern themselves by their own will, but at the same time they are conditioned by the things that are done and the plans that have been conceived [sc. by God] in order to help them." For Bardaisan, just as for Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, to be in evil means to be against God, who is the Good and Being; therefore, it cannot mean to be in stability and force, but in non-being and weakness. This is why this condition can endure only for a short

<sup>278</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section on Bardaisan.

time; for nobody can remain in non-being, otherwise one would face annihilation. Evil will have to disappear: no creature will be found in evil any more. It comes as no surprise that exactly at this point Bardaisan introduces his doctrine of apokatastasis,<sup>279</sup> as the accomplishment of Providence, “the plans conceived by the Godhead to help its creatures.”

Not only in *De anima*, *In illud*, *Oratio catechetica*, and *In Inscriptiones Psalmorum*, but also in *De tridui spatio* is the eventual vanishing of evil announced, and moreover it is connected—as in *In illud* and *Or. cat.* 26—with the action of Christ. In *De trid. sp.* GNO IX 285,7–286,12 Gregory is reflecting on the days that elapsed between the death and the resurrection of Christ. He refers them to Christ’s threefold victory over evil, respectively in the man, the woman, and the serpent (the devil), thus suggesting again the purification even of the devil from evil. Gregory states that a day “was devoted to the healing of a kind of those who were infected with evil” and that during the third day death was completely eliminated (καταργεῖται, *ibid.* GNO IX 285,21–23). This anticipates the total eviction of evil and death that will take place in the eventual apokatastasis (prophesied in 1 Cor 15:23–28). It is Christ who, assuming human nature and being raised with it, has brought again to the Being humanity, which had fallen into non-being, i.e. evil. The clearest expression is found in *De v. Mos.* 2,175: “Out of love for us, who had been corrupted in our being due to foolishness, Christ has accepted to be created just as we are, to *bring back to being* [εἰς τὸ ὄν] what had ended up out of being [τὸ ἔξω τοῦ ὄντος γενόμενος].” Here “out of being” also means “out of the Good,” that is, “far from God.”

The return of humanity to God (the Good and the only true Being) is a description of the restoration of humanity. A similar description is employed by Gregory in another work, *Hom. in Eccl.* 2, 305,10–13: given that humanity, after the fall, broke its communion with the angels, the great Shepherd of all rational creatures left the angels in order to look for the lost sheep—that is, humanity, in Gregory’s allegory—so to “*restore it among the existing beings* [ἀποκαταστήσαι τοῖς οὄσι], that the total number of God’s creatures might become perfect again, in that what had been

<sup>279</sup> “And there will come a time when even this capacity for harm that remains in them will be brought to an end by the instruction that will obtain in a different arrangement of things. And, once that new world will be constituted, *all evil movements will cease*, all rebellions will come to an end, and the fools will be persuaded, and *the lacks will be filled*, and there will be safety and peace, as a gift of the Lord of all natures.” The “lacks” are the lacks of Good represented by evil. The Good will fill everything, in Bardaisan’s and in Origen’s and Gregory’s view. See above, Ch. 1, the section on Bardaisan.

lost / had perished was *brought back*, alive and well, *to what does not perish.*" Restoration to being is apokatastasis to what does not perish (ἀπόλλυμι), that is, God and all that is good. The fall had lost humanity, i.e. had it perish (ἀπόλλυμι), but thanks to Christ humanity does no longer perish, does no longer pass on to non-being, which is evil. Like Origen, Gregory never takes ἀπόλλυμι—the verb of the parables of the lost sheep and the prodigal son in Luke—as an indication of a definitive perdition or perishing: what was lost is found by Christ; what had passed into non-being due to evil is restored to being, to the Good, by Christ.<sup>280</sup> Indeed, in *De virg.* 13 Gregory interprets the Lukan parable of the lost and recovered drachma precisely in reference to apokatastasis, the restoration of God's image to its original state—while it is now covered by the dirtiness of flesh—, abandoning sexual unions, the skin tunics, and all passions. Gregory uses exactly the same wording as Origen had in his *Homilies on Jeremiah*<sup>281</sup> when in *In Eccl.* 384–385 he interprets God's imperative "to uproot, pull down, and destroy" and then "to rebuild and plant" in Jer 1:10 in reference to the destruction of evil as a premise for the restoration: "First we must tear down the buildings of evil in us, and then find a free space for the building up of the Temple of God, which is constructed in our souls."

Restoration to being entails, once again, the disappearance of evil-non-being. Gregory explains this also in *In inscr. Ps.* GNO III/2,101,18–21: "When *evil is no more*, neither will there be anyone who is conformed to it. Therefore, once *evilness has perished* and its form has vanished into non-being, *all will take up the form of Christ*, and *one and the same form will shine in all*, the form that had been applied to human nature from the beginning." The theme of the eviction of evil in apokatastasis is joined to that of apokatastasis as restoration of the image of God in each human—a description of apokatastasis that was used by Origen. Gregory insists on the restoration to being as the counterpart of the annihilation of evil in the τέλος *ibid.* GNO III/2,155. Here, he declares that the nature of evil, which is no creature of God, is unstable—being opposed to that of God, the only one who is stable in being and is the Being itself—, as Bardaisan declared that being in evil cannot be with stability. This is why evil will disappear:

The nature of evil is unstable and passes away [ἄστατος τε καὶ παροδική]. It did *not come into existence in the beginning with the creation* [...] and it will *not continue to exist eternally along with the beings that have ontological*

<sup>280</sup> The idea of humanity rescued by Christ the good Shepherd is dear to Gregory, who elaborates on it also in *Contr. c. Apoll.* 16, GNO III/1,152–153 and *Or. cat.* 32.

<sup>281</sup> See my "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah."

*consistence*. For the beings that derive their existence from *the One who is the Being* continue to be eternally [τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος ὄντα καὶ ἐν τῷ εἶναι διὰ παντὸς διαμένει]; but if anything is *out of the One who is*, its essence is not in Being. This thing, therefore, *will pass away and disappear in due course, in the universal restoration of all into the Good* [ἐν τῇ τοῦ παντὸς πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἀποκαταστάσει]. As a consequence, in that life which lies before us in hope *there will remain no trace of evil*, which now prevails over us.

Gregory is adamant that evil will pass away, most definitely, since it is *non-being* as opposed to God the Being. Moreover, it is *finite*, as opposed to God who is infinite. This is why an eternal permanence in evil is impossible. This reminds one again of Bardaisan's aforementioned idea that it is impossible to remain in evil forever. This is further grounds for the doctrine of apokatastasis, as is indicated by Gregory in *De hominis opificio* and *De mortuis*. In *Hom. op.* 21 Gregory opposes the immutability of divine will, which is always in the Good, to the mutability of creatures' will, which can be in evil but cannot remain there stably: "It is absolutely certain that divine will is characterised by immutability, whereas the mutability of our nature does not remain stable, *not even in evil*." Since evil is finite, an infinite progression in evil is impossible:

As a consequence, *after the extreme limit of evil* [τὸ πέρας τῆς κακίας], *there comes again the Good* [ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ διαδοχή] [...] I believe that in reference to us, too, it must be considered that, even if we should have crossed the boundary of evilness [διεξελθόντες τὸν τῆς κακίας ὄρον] and reached the culmination of the shadow of sin [ἐν τῷ ἄκρῳ γενώμεθα τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν σκιάς], *we shall return to live again in the Light*.

A variant of this argument is also found in *De mortuis*: it is impossible for human will to persist in evil, because the desire for evil cannot endure due to the satiety that evil brings about. Indeed, for Gregory only evil, and not the Good, which is infinite and is God, can cause satiety (χόρος): "Our appetite, purified from all this, will orient its energy toward one single object of will, desire, and love. It will not entirely abolish our natural impulses toward the old things, but it will reorient them toward the participation in the immaterial goods. For in that state there will be a ceaseless love for the true Beauty, a praiseworthy eagerness for the treasures of wisdom, the beautiful and noble love for glory that is reached in the communion of the Kingdom of God, a sublime passion, which will *never be sated* and will *never be deluded in its good desire by the satiety* [χόρος] of these objects" (*De mort.* 19 Lozza). The relationship between God and the intellect is expressed by Gregory in terms of love, ἀγάπη and even ἔρω, a noun that was already used by Origen in reference to divine love in a revisitation and Christianisation

of Plato's doctrine of eros (and that will be developed by Ps. Dionysius). In reference to divine love, ἔρως points to the intensity of ἀγάπη.<sup>282</sup> Precisely the weakening of ἀγάπη was considered by Origen the cause of the fall of the *logika*, due to κόρος. But in the eventual apokatastasis, according to both Origen and Gregory, there will be no more κόρος, since God, the infinite Good, will never generate satiety. This will be the case in the end, but it was not so at the beginning, because at the beginning the love of God had not yet been manifested through Christ. In the end, on the contrary, perfect love will prevent any new fall, since, as Origen argued after Paul, "love never falls (out)," ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε (ἐκ)πίπτει.<sup>283</sup> Gregory remembers Origen very well when he declares that "no creature of God will fall out [μῆθενὸς ἀποπίπτοντος] of the Kingdom of God" (*In illud* 13–14 Downing). Both Gregory and Origen saw apokatastasis as characterised by perfect and indefectible love.

Everything is oriented to the τέλος, and the τέλος is apokatastasis itself. This holds true for both Origen and Gregory. I have already pointed out how in *De anima* Gregory describes the final universal apokatastasis as the τέλος of the resurrection and the τέλος of God's dealing with each soul, even in painful purifications. The definition of apokatastasis as the ultimate τέλος is also evident in *De mort.* 60,26–27 Lozza, where the Platonic and Christian theme of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ is connected with it, as it was in Origen's thought (who saw the "image of God" as an original datum but the "likeness/assimilation to God" as something to be achieved voluntarily and to be fully realised in the end): "The τέλος of the travel [...] is the *restoration* to the original condition [ἡ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκατάστασις], which is nothing other than likeness/assimilation to the divine." And the very structure of the whole work *In inscriptiones Psalmorum* illustrates that the eventual apokatastasis is the ultimate τέλος of all. In *In inscr. Ps.* GNO V 25–26 Gregory makes it clear that the whole Psalter, and as a consequence his own commentary, is constructed as a progression toward the τέλος: "The ideas are here interconnected in a structure according to a certain progression, in the service of an underlying concept. The divine Scripture of the Psalter does well to indicate us the way

<sup>282</sup> In Homily 13 on the Song of Songs, indeed, Gregory defines ἔρως as ἐπιτεταμένη or intense ἀγάπη (GNO VI 383,9). Especially in Homily 1 on the Song of Songs ἔρως expresses the soul's love for God: "Wisdom speaks clearly in the Proverbs when it describes the love [ἔρως] of the divine Beauty. This love is irreproachable; it is a passion without passion oriented toward incorporeal objects" (GNO VI 23,12); "the love [ἔρως] for God derives from sentiments that are opposite to those which produce corporeal desire" (ibid. 192,1). See my "Love," in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico*, ed. A. Di Berardino, English ed. forthcoming with InterVarsity.

<sup>283</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section on Origen.



through a wise and natural consequentiality in its teaching, expounding to us in a systematic manner, in various and different forms, the method for attaining beatitude.” Beatitude is the τέλος of everything, and to Gregory’s mind it corresponds to the eventual apokatastasis. Indeed, it is not accidental that precisely in his *In inscriptiones Psalmorum* Gregory includes some of his most suggestive descriptions of apokatastasis. Since apokatastasis is the τέλος of all, the last Psalm, 150, is read by Gregory as the eschatological thanksgiving of all creatures to God, after the eventual abolition of evil and universal restoration:

After all this, when humanity will have left behind all that which is earthly, mute, and silent, it will join the sound of its own chords to the cymbals of the heavenly choirs [...] When human nature will be *elevated again to its original condition*, the aforementioned union [of chords and cymbals] will release that sweet sound of thanksgiving to God for his love for humanity thanks to their reciprocal harmony. And through one another, and with one another, they will sing a song of thanksgiving to God for his love for humanity, which will be heard throughout the universe [...] and once the enemy [*sc.* death] has been entirely destroyed, a praise will be incessantly offered to God, with equal honour, by *every living creature, forever*. (GNO V 66,7–9; 16–22; 67,3–6)

Unity, harmony, and equality of dignity in the final apokatastasis are emphasised by Gregory not only here, but in several other passages as well, such as in *In inscr. Ps.* 57 and 87: “The title [*Maeleth*, which he translates “by means of a choral dance”] means that a choral dance and joy await those who have won the battles over evil [...] All created intellects [*πάσης τῆς νοητῆς κτίσεως*] join the winners in a harmonious choir” (GNO V 86,4–5; 13–14). The harmonious song and dance of all rational creatures, all *logika*, will be a glorious thanksgiving to God for their liberation from evil. In this thanksgiving in a choir that will involve all intellectual beings humanity will join again the angels, as it was in the beginning:

The cymbal’s sound invites all to participate in the divine dance. And it seems to me that the passage in which it is said, “Praise the Lord with the cymbals that have a beautiful sound,” illustrates *the union of our nature with the angels*. Indeed, that *union of angelic and human*, when *human nature will be restored to its original condition*, will produce, with their reciprocal encounter, that sweet sound of thanksgiving. [...] For this is the meaning of the union of the one cymbal with the other: one is the ultramundane nature of angels, the other is the rational nature of humans. Sin separated them from one another, but when *the love of God will have joined them again*, they will utter again that hymn of praise. (*In inscr. Ps.* 1,9)

The very same description of apokatastasis in terms of a harmonious song and feast in which humans will join the angels is also found, not only

toward the end of *De anima*, as I have mentioned, but also in *In diem natalem Salvatoris* GNO X/2,237–238, where moreover the specific reference to the Feast of Tabernacles and to the “horns of the altar” is the same as in *De anima*: “Then there will be one and the same symphonic feast and the voices will resound together for the consolidation of the tabernacle of *the inferior creature with the superior powers* that surround the heavenly altar. For ‘the horns of the altar’ are the sublime and transcendent powers of the spiritual nature, Principates, Virtues, Thrones, Dominions, *with whom human nature is reunited in a common feast* thanks to that reconstruction of the tabernacle that will be the resurrection.” Both here and in *De anima* it is clear that Gregory, like Origen, made use of Scriptural allegoresis in his construction of the doctrine of apokatastasis. Like Origen, Gregory too seems to dislike the term ἀλληγορία itself, due to its being compromised with “pagan” allegoresis of myths. What is more, Gregory overtly defends Origen’s very method of Scriptural allegoresis in his programmatic preface to his own exegesis of the Song of Songs. Against “certain churchmen” who attacked Origen, Gregory endorses the investigation into Scripture’s ἀνίγματα and ὑπόνοιαι.<sup>284</sup> The terminology itself is Origen’s (note again the absence of ἀλληγορία, as in Origen’s works addressed to Christians). And Gregory’s characterisation of the Song of Songs as the Temple’s Holy of Holies<sup>285</sup> clearly follows Origen’s inclusion of the Song of Songs in the δευτερώσεις as the culmination of Scripture.

The dance and feast of all rational creatures, humans and angels together, is one of Gregory’s favourite imageries applied to apokatastasis,<sup>286</sup> and it comes from Origen’s allegorisation of the heavenly feasts in relation to eschatology. In the eventual apokatastasis, the infinite beauty of God<sup>287</sup> will be the object of the *logika*’s inexhaustible desire and fruition: “the Beauty that transcends all this, that which the true Word says will be seen by the

<sup>284</sup> See R. Heine, “Gregory of Nyssa’s Apology for Allegory,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984) 360–370.

<sup>285</sup> M. Laird, “Under Solomon’s Tutelage,” *Modern Theology* 18 (2002) 507–525.

<sup>286</sup> Dance signifies joy, as Gregory makes clear in Homily 6 on Ecclesiastes: “Dance indicates the intensity of joy [εὐφροσύνη].” That perfect joy will characterise apokatastasis is declared by Gregory in *De mortuis*, where he describes apokatastasis as the restoration of God’s image in all and states that every human being “will communicate to his fellow human being the same joy [εὐφροσύνη], and will exult in the beauty of the others.” In Homily 5 on the Song of Songs Gregory likewise describes apokatastasis as a universal convivial feast where the mention of (Philo’s) “sober drunkenness” indicates ecstasy.

<sup>287</sup> See my “Good / Beauty (Agathon / Kalon),” in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 356–363.

pure of heart, is far greater than any hope and superior to any conjecture" (*De mort.* 7). The souls themselves, once purified, will be restored to "the Beauty that is proper to them," τὸ ἴδιον κάλλος (*Hom.* 15 in *Cant.* GNO VI 439,18). For "we shall be restored to the Beauty that is proper and familiar to us [τὸ οἰκεῖον κάλλος], in which we were formed at the beginning, by becoming similar to the image of our archetype [κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ ἀρχετύπου]" (*De mort.* 11). Here, again, apokatastasis is described against the theoretical backdrop of the doctrines of *oikeiōsis* and the "theology of the image," which are very dear to Gregory as they were to Origen.<sup>288</sup>

In his *De beatitudinibus*, too, Gregory describes the eventual apokatastasis, which he sees indicated in Jesus's words in the beatitudes, in particular the eighth. This predicts "the restoration into heavens [ἡ εἰς τοὺς οὐρανούς ἀποκατάστασις] of those who had fallen into captivity," namely the captivity of sin (PG 44,1292B). For heavens are the homeland of all rational creatures. This is why Gregory connects heavens with apokatastasis as a return home after the captivity of sin, also in *De or. dom.* PG 44,1148C: "He will restore you to your heavenly homeland," ἀποκαταστήσει σε τῇ οὐρανίῳ πατρίδι. The doctrine of apokatastasis is also expressed in *De vit. Mos.* GNO VII/1, 57,8–58,3, in the sense of the eventual salvation of those who are in hell. Moses' outstretched hands are read by Gregory—as by Justin<sup>289</sup>—as a prefiguration of the cross of Christ and its effects. Just as Moses, by stretching out his arms during the plagues of Egypt, saved not only the Israelites, but the Egyptians as well, who symbolise sinners, so does Jesus with his cross save sinners as well. The plague of darkness in particular (Ex 10:21) suggests to Gregory that Christ's cross can dissipate even the outer darkness of hell. For Moses could remove the darkness from Egypt, and Christ with his cross can remove even the outer darkness that, with "Gehenna," in the Gospel is a designation of hell (Matt 8:12):

Perhaps someone, basing himself on the fact that after three days of suffering in darkness even the Egyptians participated in the light, could be induced to understand in this passage the announcement of the *apokatastasis* [τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν] that we expect will come to pass in the end, in the Kingdom of Heavens: the restoration of those who had been condemned to Gehenna [τῶν ἐν Γεέννῃ καταδικασμένων]. Indeed, the "darkness that could be perceived,"

<sup>288</sup> To Gregory's Christianisation of the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiōsis* I have devoted a forthcoming study.

<sup>289</sup> See my "San Giustino Martire: il multiforme uso di *μυστήριον* e il lessico dell'esegesi tipologica delle Scritture," in *Il volto del mistero*, ed. A.M. Mazzanti (Castel Bolognese, 2006), 35–66.

as the story goes, is very similar, in both name and meaning, to the "outer darkness." Now, *both this and the outer darkness are dispelled* when Moses outstretched his arms *for the salvation of those who lay in darkness*.

It is significant that interpolations and glosses are attested for this passage—just as for passages in *De anima*<sup>290</sup>—aimed at denying that Gregory ever held the doctrine of apokatastasis. Some even attempted to delete from this passage the very term ἀποκατάστασις.

The same identification of the "outer darkness" with hell emerges in Gregory's exegesis of Psalm 59, where he understands v. 6 and 14, "the enemies (will) return in the evening," in the sense that sinners will be pushed into the external darkness, out of the city of virtue or heavenly Jerusalem: "thrown out of the supernal city, punished with the hunger for the goods." Gregory does *not* describe this punishment as eternal. He rather draws a strong differentiation between the section in which he treats the otherworldly distinction between the damned and the blessed, and that in which he describes the subsequent and last stage, that of the eventual apokatastasis, after the elimination of all evil. In the end, sinners will be liberated from sin, and this will no longer reign over anyone:

There will be *no destruction of humans*, that the work of God may not be emptied by annihilation. Instead of human creatures, *what will be destroyed and reduced to non-being will be sin*. [...] When all that is *evil has disappeared*, "they will know—says Scripture—that God is the Lord of Jacob and of the ends of the earth." Indeed, since there will be *no evilness left anywhere*, the Lord will be the absolute sovereign of all the earth, after evil, which now reigns over most people, *will have been wiped out*.

The rejection of the hypothesis of a destruction of creatures of God, in order to avoid making the work of God vain, is a feature that Gregory shares with Origen. On this basis Origen refused to conceive of the destruction even of the devil, since what God has created in order for it to exist must exist and not perish. What will be annihilated, according to both Origen and Gregory, is sin—which is no creature of God, but, being evil, has no ontological consistence—and not sinners. Sinners will be purified, albeit painfully.

It is meaningful that Gregory continued to support the doctrine of apokatastasis until the end of his life, even in what very probably is his last work, the *Homilies on the Song of Songs* (ed. GNO VI). In the fourth homily Gregory claims that the τέλος is "that love may always increase and develop, *until the One who 'wants all to be saved and to reach the knowledge of the truth' has*

<sup>290</sup> See the critical notes in my edition *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*.

*realised his will* [...] until the good will of the Bridegroom *is accomplished*. And this good will is that *all humans be saved and reach the knowledge of the truth*." That universal salvation is the will of God is declared in 1 Timothy; Gregory adds that this will shall definitely be realised in the end. This corresponds to what he said e.g. in *Inst.* GNO VIII/1,48: "God's perfect will is to purify the soul of any stain by grace [...] and bring it pure to God."

The last homily, the fifteenth, probably the last thing Gregory wrote in his earthly life, even multiplies the references to apokatastasis, and its very conclusion is entirely devoted to the description of apokatastasis, after the complete vanishing of evilness from all and the attainment of the communion with God-the Good by all. First Gregory makes it clear, in accord with Paul and Origen, that "God receives everyone in his order, giving to each one in proportion to his merits," which is also the classical definition of justice. God's justice, however, does not contradict God's love. Thus, after this, Gregory quotes Rom 8:35,38–39 concerning God's unfailing love: "Nobody will ever be able to separate us from God's love, in Christ Jesus: neither life nor death,<sup>291</sup> neither present nor future, nor anything else of what exists." He takes up Paul's, and Origen's, differentiation between doing good out of love and avoiding evil out of fear, and remarks: "But if, as it is written [1 John 4:18], love will utterly dispel fear, and fear, by transforming itself, will become love, then it will be found that what is saved constitutes a unity [μονάς τὸ σωζόμενον], since *all will be unified* with one another [πάντων ἀλλήλοις ἐνωθέντων], in connaturality with the only Good [ἐν τῇ πρὸς τὸ μόνον ἀγαθὸν συμφυΐα], thanks to perfection" (GNO VI 466–467). That this final ἕνωσις—one of the most important characterisations of apokatastasis in both Origen and Gregory—will involve all rational creatures is made clear by Gregory immediately afterwards:

The run for this beatitude is *common to all the souls of every order* [...] it is a natural impulse *common to all* that of tending to what is blessed and praised [...] until *all* look at the same object of their desire and *become one and the same thing* and *no evilness* [κακία] *will any longer remain in anyone*. Then God will really be 'all in all.' For all, thanks to the *union* with one another, will be joined in *communion* with the Good, in Jesus Christ Our Lord.

<sup>291</sup> In his Homily 12 on the Song of Songs Gregory, like Origen, denies the ontological positivity of death and evil: "The exact centre of God's plantation is Life, whereas death per se was not planted and has no roots, because it does not possess any place of its own anywhere. It is planted only by virtue of the privation of life, when participation in the best substance weakens in a living being." This is why Gregory can proclaim the final eviction of death and evil.

Once again, until the end of his life, Gregory follows Origen's argument for the eventual disappearance of evil and the apokatastasis and unity of all *logika* on the basis of 1 Cor 15:28.

From the thematic viewpoint, Gregory's doctrine of apokatastasis relies not only on the metaphysical issue of the ontological non-subsistence of evil and its final vanishing and on the motif of the return of all to the initial unity and harmony—both of which are Platonic notions that at the same time find support in Scripture (e.g. 1 Cor 15:24–28 and John 17)—but also on the so-called “theology of the image,” which has a Biblical ground in Gen 1:26 (human beings as εἰκὼν of God and called to ὁμοίωσις with God), but at the same time has a strong basis in the philosophical, and especially Platonic, notion of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ. This nicely shows how apokatastasis, too, is for Origen and Gregory a doctrine of *Christian Platonism*. This is also why Gregory decided to support this doctrine in his remake of Plato's *Phaedo*.

Indeed, Gregory, following in the footsteps of Origen, also described apokatastasis as the restoration of the image of God in the human being, which follows the rejection of evil and the adhesion to the Good, for instance in *De virg.* 12 GNO VIII/1,302: ἡ τῆς θείας εἰκόνος εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκατάστασις. Apokatastasis, as I have pointed out, is defined by Gregory as the restoration to the original state of human nature. Therefore, to know more about the eventual restoration, it is necessary to investigate what the original state of human nature was. Now, human nature in its original state was created precisely in the image of God. In *Hom. op.* PG 44,188CD, Gregory draws once again the equation between *anastasis* and *apokatastasis*, and describes the latter as a restoration to the original, prelapsarian state, a state free from sin: “The grace of the resurrection, which is announced to us, is nothing other than *the restoration of those who have fallen into their original condition* [τὴν εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῶν πεπτοκώτων ἀποκατάστασιν]. Indeed, the grace that we expect is a sort of *re-ascent to the first kind of life* [ἐπάνοδος τις ἐπὶ τὴν πρώτην ζωὴν], given that it lifts up again into Paradise the being that had been chased from it [τὸν ἀποβληθέντα τοῦ παραδείσου πάλιν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐπαναγοῦσα].” Notably, the Christological foundation of apokatastasis for Gregory is clear also from the essential role he assigns to Christ within the process of recovery of God's image by humanity, for example in *De perf.* GNO VIII/1, 194–195: “The One who is beyond any knowledge and comprehension, ineffable, inexpressible and inexplicable, in order to *make you again an image of God* [εἰκὼν θεοῦ], out of love for humanity, has become, he too, an image of the invisible God, so to be configured to you in the proper form that he took on, and that, thanks to him, you might be again configured to the impression [χαρακτῆρα] of his archetypal beauty, to *become again what you were in*

*the beginning.*” Christ has taken up this role in apokatastasis out of love for humanity (φιλανθρωπία), which, as Gregory states in *Hom. in Cant.* GNO VI 107—on the basis of Origen’s doctrine of the ἐπὶ τοιαῖς of Christ—, has become the very name of Christ. The indispensable role played by Christ in the process of restoration, in both Origen’s and Gregory’s view, motivates Gregory’s assertion in *Ep.* 1,18—parallel to Origen’s in *Hom. 3 in Ps.* 36(37), 1—that “all of us equally need Him who removes the sins of the world [...] calls the dead to life and heals every illness.”

Thanks to Christ, humanity will be restored to its original beauty<sup>292</sup> and its original state, the one that it had at its creation. In this connection, it is crucial to observe that Gregory, like Origen, did entertain a theory of “double creation.”<sup>293</sup> The resurrection will be the restoration of both body and soul (and not only the body) to their original state, as is especially clear from *Hom. in Eccl.* 1: “In the beginning *the soul* was exactly as it will appear again in the future, after its purification. And *the body* was made and created by God’s hands exactly as the resurrection will reveal it in due course. For, just as you will see it after the resurrection, so was it created at the beginning. For the *resurrection* is nothing else than the *restoration* into the original condition.”

The definition of resurrection-restoration as a grace, χάρις, a gift of God (e.g. *Or. cat.* 16; *Hom. op.* 17; *De mort.* 20–21), is another idea that Gregory shares with Origen, who, quoting from Paul, defined it χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ. While retribution of merits or sins will be commensurate with one’s deeds, as becomes God’s justice, the eventual restoration will only depend on God’s grace; it will be commensurate with nothing, will have no limit and no end, and will be a gift of God (as Bardaisan too said at the end of the *Liber legum regionum*, apokatastasis will be “a gift of the Lord of all natures”). Restoration, made possible by God’s grace and the work of Christ, will bring back human nature to the condition of its creation, namely its *first* creation, which is the perfection of humanity, as Gregory declares in Homily 15 on the Song of Songs (GNO VI 458,10–12;17–19). For only in the first creation was the human being made in the image of God, whereas in its second creation it was divided into two genders and acquired a heavy corporeality, subject to passions. This Origenian (and in part Philonic) point of view is made clear in *Hom. op.* 16, where, commenting on Gen 1:26–27, Gregory remarks: “Double is the creation of our nature, one which is assimilated to

<sup>292</sup> An anticipation of the restoration of God’s image in humans is found in baptism: see my “Baptism in Gregory of Nyssa’s Theology.”

<sup>293</sup> See my “Preexistence of Souls?”

the divinity, and the other which is divided according to this division," i.e. the division into genders, which is alien to God; it rather pertains to beasts (in *Hom. op.* 18 passions are said to have arisen in humans when these assumed the irrational life of beasts after the fall, which in *Hom. op.* 20 and *De an.* 81 is described as choosing good and evil rather than good alone). Gregory explains that Genesis first says, "God created the human being in the image of God," and only afterwards does it mention the division of the human being into male and female, "something that is *completely extraneous to our notion of God*." Since the division into genders cannot possibly be applied to God, then the human being divided into genders cannot be the human being created "in the image of God," but it will be a secondary one, created by God in prevision of the original sin, since after sin the division into genders would become necessary for the sake of reproduction, given the introduction of death due to sin.<sup>294</sup>

Without the fall, humanity would have shared the angels' life; now it shares the life of beasts (gender distinction, procreation, πάθη, death).<sup>295</sup>

<sup>294</sup> Likewise Origen, for instance in *Dial. c. Her.* 12, observed: "Some believe that in Genesis it is a mere repetition if, after the creation of the human being [Gen 1:26–27], it is said: 'God took some earth and fashioned [ἐπλασεν] the human being' [Gen 2:7]. On this interpretation it would follow that what is 'in the image of God' is the body, and thus one would attach to God a human form [...]. But we are not so crazy as to claim that God is composed of an inferior element [sc. the body] and a superior one [sc. the intellectual soul]—since on this hypothesis 'being in the image of God' would refer to both components—, or else [...] to claim that 'to be in the image of God' has been accomplished preferably in the inferior component and not in the superior one." Rather (ibid. 16), "When the human being was created, first that 'in the image of God' was created, that in which no matter is found; for it is not matter that makes up the human being 'in the image of God' [...] Moses is not the only one who knows that this human being in the image of God is immaterial, superior to any corporeal substance, but the Apostle too is aware of this, as his words prove, where he says: 'Put off the old human being, with its works, and put on the new, which renovates itself making progress in knowledge, in the image of its Creator. For each of us there are two human beings: the exterior [ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος] an the interior [ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος].'"

<sup>295</sup> "It is not licit to attribute the beginning of our state subject to passions to that human nature which was created after the likeness of God. Rather, when animal life first entered the world, and the human being—for the reason I have already explained—received something of the animal nature, i.e. the way of generation, at the same time it also received a share in the other attributes contemplated in that nature." This is also why virginity, as a holistic virtue (as described already by Methodius: see my "L'Inno a Cristo-Logos"), is a privileged path for the restoration. And this is also why I do not think that Gregory's *De virginitate* is ironic in its praise of virginity. On this debate see at least M.D. Hart, "Gregory of Nyssa's Ironic Praise of Celibate Life," *Heythrop Journal* 33 (1992) 1–19; contra V.A. Carras, "A Reevaluation of Marriage, Celibacy, and Irony in Gregory of Nyssa's *On Virginity*" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13 (2005) 111–121. Hans Boersma agrees with me in *Embodiment and Virtue in Gregory of Nyssa* (Oxford, 2013); I am grateful to him for sharing his monograph with me for discussion way before its publication.



But it will share again the angels' life in the eventual apokatastasis (*De mort.* 20). This idea of the angelic life that human beings enjoyed at the beginning and will enjoy again in the end derives from Hilary (*Tr. in Ps.* 136,11: *angelorum frequentium coetu admiscebatur*; 118 Samech 9: *nobis tunc vita angelorum vivendum sit*) and is deeply rooted in Gregory's thought, e.g. in *Hom. op.* 17: "the grace of the resurrection is not presented otherwise to us but as the restoration of the dead into their original condition. Indeed, the grace that we expect is the restoration to the original life that brings back to paradise those who had been chased out of it. Therefore, if the life of those who have been restored into the original condition is *similar to the life of the angels*, it is clear that the prelapsarian life was *something angelic*; thus, our restoration into the original condition makes us *similar to angels*." This is what Origen foresaw too, e.g. in *Comm. in Cant.* 4,1,27: *sanctae vero illae et beatae angelicae virtutes quibus electi quique et beati ex resurrectione sociabuntur, qui erunt sicut angeli Dei*. Gregory ascribes an anticipation of this angelic life to persons of great spiritual maturity and perfection, such as Macrina and her fellow nuns. At the beginning of *Vita Macrinae*, Gregory states that their life was "detached and absolutely far from earthly vanities, and regulated in such a way as to imitate the life of angels"; they "were lifted up, light, and strolled around the firmament, together with the celestial powers." The very verb *συμμετεωροπέω*, which is here used to indicate the nuns' hiking in heaven together with the angels, is also significantly used in the description of Basil's angelic life.<sup>296</sup> The notion of the soul's wandering in the celestial regions comes of course from Plato *Phaedr.* 246BC (*περιπολέω, μετεωροπέω*) and from Philo's idea of the soul's roaming in heaven together with the angels (*LA* 3,71; *De prem.* 20). On the basis of Plato, Plotinus too ascribed to the soul the action of *μετεωροπεῖν* in heaven (*Enn.* 4,8,2,20–22). Gregory himself adopts the terminology of the *hyperouranios* place, which he assimilates to Paradise, e.g. in *De beat.* 2, 90,13–16, which is clearly inspired by *Phaedr.* 274BC: "If we provide wings to our intellect and *reach the arch of heaven*, we shall find *the ultra-celestial land* [*τὴν ὑπερουράνιον γῆν*], which is reserved as a heritage for those who lived according to virtue." Origen too had used Plato's expression, e.g. in *CC* 3,80; 6,19.59, and especially 7,44, which very likely inspired Gregory's passage: "The Christian prays everywhere [...] and ascends beyond the whole cosmos. He or she does not even stop at

<sup>296</sup> "With his soul he rose aloft in the ultramundane region, and [...] ended up walking among the intellectual creatures, wandering in heaven with the divine powers, without any carnal weight impeding his spirit's voyage" (*In Bas. fr.* 131,15–18).

*the arch of heaven*, but his or her intellect *reaches the ultra-celestial place* [ὑπερουράνιον τόπον], being guided by the divine spirit, and, staying outside the world, asks for things that, once granted, contribute to the advancement toward beatitude [μακαριότης], which is with God, and is obtained through his Son, who is the Logos of God." Humanity's initial and final sharing in the life of angels is also expressed by Gregory, as I have exemplified, with the image of the common dance, choir, and feast of humans and angels. In *In inscr. Ps.* 2,6 he uses this image to describe the original harmony, which was lost by sin.<sup>297</sup> The "final victory" will reconstitute that original dance: "when you will have been integrated into *the angelic dance* and your soul will have been purified from the assault of temptations" (ibid.). Thus, Lazarus "kept himself free from sin for the whole duration of his life, and, when the scenery of this world disappeared for him, because the enemy had been defeated already during his earthly life, he was *immediately found among the angels* [...] This is *the dance and roaming with the angels*, the bosom of the patriarch who receives Lazarus in himself, and the inclusion in the *joyful symphony of the choir*" (*In inscr. Ps.* 2,6).

The restoration of human nature to its original condition will include the body, which is not conceived by Gregory, or by Origen, as the consequence of the fall. Rational creatures had bodies already before the fall. What the fall entailed for humans was a transformation of their bodies into mortal, heavy, corruptible, gendered and liable to passions. Gregory is speaking of this body when in *De mort.* 11, p. 54 Lozza, he argues that with the death of the body humans come closer to the Good, which is immaterial (being God): "once liberated from the flesh that covers us, as an ugly mask, we return to the Beauty that is proper and familiar to us, in whose image we were formed from the very beginning, by becoming similar to the form of our Archetype. For the matter of the body is stranger to the incorporeal nature. In this life, the intellect is enchained by necessity, but it endures, even if it lives a life that is stranger to it by nature." Similar considerations are found in *De anima* and influenced by Plato's *Phaedo*. It must be noted that the "skin tunics" given to the protoplasts after their sin are not for Gregory, just as they are not for Origen, the body tout court, but the mortal body (νεκρότης, *Or. catech.* 8), which God gave to human beings with the

<sup>297</sup> "There was a time when the ballet of the spiritual nature was one and the same [...] it looked at one choirmaster and danced according to the harmony that the master bestowed on the movement with his indications [...] In the beginning, human beings danced together with the angelic powers." But sin "broke that divine harmony of the dance."

intention of healing them from evil. The fact that these tunics come “from outside” (ἐξωθεν) means that mortality is not part of human nature, but it is adventitious and must disappear in the end. So Gregory describes (ibid. 26) the destruction of mortality thanks to the death of Christ. By dying, Christ destroys the power of death as light destroys darkness. The first human being, created in the image of God, knew of no “skin tunics.” The image of God in humans is the (intellectual) soul; it cannot be the body, either heavy or light, because God is completely incorporeal (*De mort.* 10).<sup>298</sup> Humanity was created in the image of God in its “intellectual divine essence” (*De infant.* GNO III 2,77,17). The human soul, qua image of God, shares immortality with God: it must necessarily “have in itself an element that is immortal” (*Or. cat.* 5). The immortality of the human being as a whole was lost with the fall, but it will be recovered in the end (*In S. Pascha* GNO IX 254). At the end of *De anima*, likewise, Gregory lists the qualities that human nature will recover qua image of God in the eventual apokatastasis: incorruptibility is the first. The human being is in the image of God in that it is endowed with intellect and reason, νοῦς and λόγος (*Hom. op.* PG 44,149B), and on account of its goodness, which is closely connected with the indelible presence of God’s image in it. Indeed, just as the image of God in the human being—for Gregory as well as for Origen—can never be erased, however obfuscated by sin it can become, neither can the impression of God’s goodness in a human ever be erased: “God’s goodness can never be found separate from our nature [...] but it is always present in every person; it may become obfuscated by the concerns or pleasures of life, and then it is unknown and hidden, but it is immediately found again, as soon as we reorient our thought to God” (*De virg.* GNO VIII 2, 300).

Gregory is not shy about taking over Plato’s famous view (*Phaedo*, 62B) that the body is a prison for the soul (*De mort.* 7), which, to attain its perfection, must detach from it (this is not only an idea of Gregory’s first works, but it endured till the end of his life<sup>299</sup>); though, he refers this to the present, heavy and corruptible body, and not to the glorious and incorruptible body

<sup>298</sup> “What is the divine quality to which the soul is similar? It is not a body, nor an image, nor a form [...] but it must be known that it is what remains after the elimination of all this, that is, what is intelligible, immaterial, impalpable, incorporeal, and without dimensions.”

<sup>299</sup> E.g., still in Homily 15 on the Song of Songs (GNO VI 439), from the very last period of Gregory’s production, as in his earlier *De anima*, Gregory states that the soul “must purify itself from all that which is material, even from every material thought, and transform into what is intellectual and immaterial [ἄϋλον], a most splendid image of the Beauty of the Archetype.”

of the resurrection (which Plato obviously did not postulate).<sup>300</sup> This was already Origen's line. It must be recalled in this connection that Origen considered the author of *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*—the two Platonic dialogues that seem to have most influenced Gregory—as inspired by the Mosaic Scriptures (CC 7,28; 6,19). In this perspective, there was not a contradiction, but basically a continuity between Scripture and Plato's teaching; though there is no doubt that the first authority is Scripture, and Scripture, not Plato, is what Origen stuck to in case of conflict. This is the same perspective that is also found in Gregory, who chose Plato's *Phaedo* as a model for his own Christian remake and “correction,” *De anima et resurrectione*. This is why both Gregory and Origen can be Christian Platonists, and no less Christians because they are Platonists.

What makes the main difference between these Christian Platonists and Plato in regard to the body-prison theme is that for them the spiritual body that will be rendered to humans at their resurrection will no longer be a prison, as Gregory explains at length in *De anima* discussing the nature of the risen body,<sup>301</sup> and in *De mortuis* 18, where Gregory details that at the *παλιγγενεσία* (an alternative term for *ἀνάστασις*, in reference to the “rebirth” it will imply) the body will change into “something more divine.” It is to be remarked that this clearly functions only on the presupposition common to these two Christian Platonists: namely, that the *τέλος* of the resurrection (*ἀνάστασις*) of all humans will be their ultimate restoration (*ἀποκατάστασις*). For them, a perspective in which the resurrection does *not* bring about the eventual restoration of all simply makes no sense and deprives the universal resurrection itself of its meaning, which they conceive holistically (resurrection of body, soul, and intellect, and not of the body alone). In the event of a resurrection that has *not* universal restoration as its outcome, manifestly it is not the case that the risen body will no longer be a prison for the soul; for bodies which are destined to suffer retributive punishments forever along with their souls are even *more* of a prison than the earthly mortal and frail bodies are. Therefore, Origen's and Gregory's “correction” of Plato's view of the body-prison only works within the framework of their doctrine of *apokatastasis*.

This “correction” entailed for Gregory, as for Origen, that there will be an individual identity between the dead and the risen body. Indeed, what will remain and guarantee the continuity between the two is, according to

<sup>300</sup> See my “Preexistence of Souls?”

<sup>301</sup> See my extensive commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*.

Gregory, just as according to Origen, the εἶδος or metaphysical form, which remains unaltered both in the present life and in the future, whereas already in the present life the material substratum is in continuous flux. In Gregory's view, the εἶδος of each individual body is its "stable and unalterable element," τὸ μόνιμόν τε καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχον, which he likens to an impression of a seal: "The metaphysical form, like the imprint of a seal, necessarily remains with the soul, who knows very well all that which has been impressed with this seal; in this way, the soul receives all this again with itself, whatever corresponds to the impression of the metaphysical form, on the occasion of the reconstitution," that is, the resurrection.<sup>302</sup> The metaphysical form—according to Gregory just as to Origen—is not the soul proper, but it remains with the soul forever, and guarantees the individual identity of each one's body, earthly and risen. The risen body will be the same as the earthly, and not another one, but its qualities—both for Gregory and for Origen—will be different: it will be glorious, immortal, not liable to passions. Again, this view only fits a perspective of an ultimate apokatastasis.

At the end of *De anima*, too, Gregory describes apokatastasis as the return to the original state of humanity: "the image [εἰκὼν] of God, which is human nature." The initial condition of the human being, just as the final one, is coherently described by Gregory as grace and beatitude, and this still at the end of his life, for instance in Homily 15 on the Song of Songs (GNO VI 439,18–19): "the original beatitude of our nature," τὴν πρώτην τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν μακαριότητα; in *Or. cat.* 16: "the original grace of humanity," ἡ πρώτη περὶ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον χάρις. Likewise already in *De an.* 148, 152, and 156: "Our nature, after becoming liable to passions, has been joined to the consequences of a passible life. But once it has *returned* to that state of beatitude which consists in the privation of passions, it will have nothing more to do with the consequences of vice [...] The difference between a life oriented to virtue and another oriented to vice will be manifested in the future existence especially on the basis of the following criterion: participating before or after in the beatitude that is the object of our hope [...] every beatitude that buds

<sup>302</sup> *Hom. op.* PG 44,228B: ἀναγκαίως τοῦ εἶδους οἷον ἐκμαγεῖω σφραγίδος τῇ ψυχῇ παραμείναντος, οὐδὲ τὰ ἐναπομαζάμενα τῇ σφραγίδι τὸν τύπον ὑπ' αὐτῆς ἀγνοεῖται, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἀναστοιχειώσεως ἐκεῖνα δέχεται πάλιν πρὸς ἑαυτήν, ὥστε ἂν ἐναρμόσῃ τῷ τύπῳ τοῦ εἶδους. See full treatment in my "Preexistence of Souls?" See also S. Wessel, "Memory and Individuality in Gregory of Nyssa's *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 (2010) 369–392 on the soul's memory of bodily atoms, so that it can guarantee the permanence of individual identity through death and resurrection. This is also how, I would add, the resurrection can be conceived by Gregory as a restoration, so to imply the ultimate apokatastasis.

for us thanks to the resurrection proceeds from the grace that is from the beginning." In *De inscr. Ps.* GNO V 26,6–10, the initial and final beatitude of human nature is declared to consist in the assimilation/likeness to God (a Platonic and Genesiac notion at the same time).<sup>303</sup> The very idea that the final restoration will entail a return to the original beatitude is clearly indebted to Origen. Gregory even echoes his words when in Homily 15 on the Song of Songs (GNO VI 457,21–458,1) he connects the τέλος with the ἀρχή: "as creation exists from the beginning thanks to the divine power, the τέλος of every creature is connected with its ἀρχή," although with the important proviso that for both Origen and Gregory the end will be, not statically identical to, but even *better* than, the beginning, and will contemplate an infinite development in the rational creatures' love for God.

Gregory, for instance in *C. usur.* PG 46, 436 speaks of an αἰώνια suffering for those who are punished, or purified, in the other world. But this is not in the least inconsistent with his belief in the eventual apokatastasis, because he is well aware that αἰώνιος in the Bible does not mean "eternal" unless it refers to God, and he strictly follows this model in his own linguistic use, just as Origen and several other Fathers did.<sup>304</sup> In the Bible, in Gregory, and in these Fathers αἰώνιος, when it does not refer to God (it does mostly in Biblical quotations), refers to the αἰών to come, which Gregory conceives, not as eternal,

<sup>303</sup> "The Nature that transcends everything is the primal Nature, and it is in the proper sense that it is called blessed [μακάριον]. Among human beings, on the contrary, beatitude [τὸ μακάριον], which is the nature of the One in which we participate, is given only to a certain extent, on the basis of the participation in the true Being. Therefore, assimilation to God [ὁμοίωσις Θεῷ] is a definition of human beatitude [τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης μακαριότητος]."

<sup>304</sup> See my "Αἰώνιος and αἰών in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa," and, with full documentation, Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, section on Gregory Nyssen. Gregory of Nyssa in general uses αἰδῖος to indicate "eternal" in an absolute sense, most often in reference to God (there are innumerable instances), in which case the eternity at stake is absolute, and is associated with immutability and the transcendence of space and time. But he also employs it frequently in reference to eternal life, which sometimes is identified with that of God himself, in which the blessed will participate. But the term is never employed of otherworldly punishments, nor of matter or evil, which, since they are not *ab aeterno*, cannot subsist in *aeternum* either. Gregory also uses αἰώνιος, frequently in scriptural citations or comments, whether of God, who transcends ages, or of life in the next world, when he is citing Scripture or wishes to underscore the future aspect, that is, that it pertains to the future αἰών, or, finally, in connection with punishments in the next world. These are not deemed eternal, but rather of an indeterminate duration, albeit very long (in some cases throughout an entire αἰών and right up to the final apokatastasis). This is particularly clear from various passages in *De anima* and *De infantibus*, where he uses αἰών and αἰώνιος in reference to purifying punishment, while explicitly denying that it is eternal: the αἰών in question is that between the death of the individual and universal apokatastasis, after which there is no aeon more, but αἰδιότης in God.

but as destined to come to an end with the eventual apokatastasis itself, which will inaugurate the true αἰδιότης or eternity. Once again, he is in line with Origen, who saw the final apokatastasis as the end of all aeons, when no one will be in an αἰών any more, but God will be “all in all.” Therefore, the αἰώνιος death, the αἰώνιος punishment, or the αἰώνιον fire mentioned in the NT are not understood by Gregory as eternal, but as pertaining to the world to come. Because of this crucial linguistic misunderstanding, for instance, in the eighth century Germanus of Constantinople, convinced as he was that Gregory with αἰώνιος meant “eternal,” since he also found the doctrine of apokatastasis unequivocally supported throughout his works and was unable to explain away this apparent contradiction, thought that Gregory’s manuscripts had been interpolated by Origenists (*ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod. 233*).<sup>305</sup> However, Gregory, like Origen and other Fathers, does not understand αἰώνιος punishment or perdition, or αἰώνιον fire, as “eternal” proper, but rather as lasting for an indefinite period, depending on each single case, in the world to come. This was understood very well by another opponent of universal apokatastasis, Severus of Antioch, who easily recognised the presence of this doctrine in Gregory and countered it: τῷ ἐν ἀγίοις Γρηγορίῳ, τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ Νύσσης, τὰ εἰρημένα περὶ ἀποκαταστάσεως οὐκ ἀποδέχεται (*Phot. Bibl. cod. 232*). In the sixth century, the monk Barsanuphius of Gaza also recognised that Gregory clearly taught apokatastasis (περὶ ἀποκαταστάσεως σαφῶς λέγει ὁ αὐτὸς Γρηγόριος ὁ Νύσσης), and was baffled by this fact and Gregory’s being a saint of the orthodox church (*C. opin. Orig. PG 86,891–902*).

The same proviso must be put forward regarding the terminology of “perdition” in Gregory. To us, it may seem to entail a connotation of definiteness and eternity, but not to Gregory, nor to Origen or other Fathers. Like Origen—and like the Gospel of Luke in the parables of the lost sheep, the lost drachma, and the prodigal son, all of which are “lost” (ἀπώλολε) but are found again—, Gregory, too, when he uses the lexicon of ἀπώλεια and ἀπόλλυμι, does not in the least mean a definitive perdition. It is not accidental that he refers precisely to apokatastasis, and uses the very term ἀποκατάστασις, while commenting on the parable of the lost sheep in *In Eccl. GNO V 305*. For example, Origen in *Princ. 3,5,7* foresees the eventual “reintegration of

<sup>305</sup> Those heretics who “cherish the foolish doctrine of the restoration [λήρος ἀποκατάστασις] of the race of the demons and of humans who are damned to an unending punishment [κόλασιν ἀτελεύτητον]” inserted in Gregory’s writings “the inform, obscure, and pernicious products of Origen’s dreams.” Photius quotes from a lost work of Germanus’s, the Ἀνταποδοτικός, whose aim was to demonstrate that the works of Gregory of Nyssa were “pure from the stain of Origenism [Ὡριγενεῖου λώβης].”

the lost,"<sup>306</sup> whose perdition, therefore, cannot be considered as definitive and eternal. Likewise, Gregory in *De infant.* GNO III/2,96,3–5, speaks, to be sure, of the "perdition of those condemned" (τὴν τῶν κατακρίτων ἀπώλειαν), but, by stating that it will extend for an indefinite period and that its goal is purification, he clearly excludes the eternity of this "perdition": "because of the profundity of inveterate evil, the punishment provided for the purpose of purification will tend to an indefinite duration," εἰς ἄπειρον παρατείνεται ἡ διὰ τῆς καθάρσεως κόλασις (ibid. 87,10–12). Tending toward does not mean to reach, and indefinite does not mean eternal; indeed, if its end is purification and not retribution, this κόλασις cannot endure eternally. In the same way, in a passage in *De perfectione* Gregory does speak of a "condemnation" in the future life, but he does not at all say, or even suggest, that it will be eternal: "In the future life, all those who are resurrected from the tomb in the earth will certainly not have the same condition, but it is said [John 5:29] that those who have done the good will obtain a resurrection of life, while those who have done evil will have a resurrection of condemnation [...]. The Mediator between God and human beings, who through himself joins humanity to God, joins only what is worthy of becoming connatural with God." Therefore, if any rational creature has still in itself anything unworthy of God, first it must be purified from all this, and only afterwards will it become worthy of being joined to God: "Whoever is truly a temple of God will be admitted by the Mediator to participation in the divinity, *after being made pure* in order to receive its purity." The notion of Christ as a Mediator between the human and the divine nature is an important one in Gregory. In *Ref. conf. Eun.* 373–374 he connects it with apokatastasis, the union of humanity with God, called "the τέλος of the Christian mystery."<sup>307</sup> The same notion of Christ-Mediator as a presupposition for the eventual apokatastasis is also found in *In illud*, p. 21,12–13 Downing.

When, likewise, Gregory speaks of a διαωνίζουσα suffering in fire (*De benef.* GNO IX 100,5) he means that it will extend indefinitely through the

<sup>306</sup> "Just as the submission of the Son to the Father means the *perfect restoration of all creation*, so also does the submission of his enemies to the Son means *the salvation of those who submit and the reintegration of the lost.*"

<sup>307</sup> "The Apostle claims that the one who with his teachings made the Law of the commandments useless is the Mediator between God and humans, saying literally as follows: 'One is God and one is the Mediator between God and humans, the human being Jesus Christ.' In this passage, therefore, with the term 'Mediator' he has entirely revealed *the telos of the Christian mystery* [...] The Mediator between God and humans received the communion with the human nature, and was not only believed to be a human being, but he indeed was so, in truth."



αἰών to come, but not after it, in the final apokatastasis, as is especially clear from his *De anima*. Also, the ἄληκτον ὀδυρμόν mentioned in *Adv. eos qui cast. aegre fer.* GNO X,2, 328,16 is an incessant lamentation, in that those who are suffering are continually lamenting, but it is not eternal proper. Everywhere, and especially in *De anima* and *In illud*, Gregory manifestly sees the αἰώνιον fire as a purifying fire, which, far from burning eternally and thus contrasting the doctrine of apokatastasis, makes the eventual restoration possible thanks to the elimination of evil, as spurious matter, that it performs in every soul:

The nature of evil, at last, will be reduced to non-being, completely *disappearing* from being, and God's purest goodness will embrace in itself *every* rational creature, and *none* of the beings that have come to existence thanks to God will fall out of the Kingdom of God, when every evilness that has mixed with beings, as a kind of spurious matter, will have been *consumed by the fusion of the purifying fire*, and thus every being that has come to existence thanks to God will *return to being such as it was at the beginning*, when it had *not yet received evil*.  
(*In illud*, 13–14 Downing)

And there are many other passages in which Gregory interprets the infernal fire or Gehenna as purifying fire, such as *De mort.* 15, p. 64 Lozza, and 16, p. 66 Lozza, and *Or. cat.* 138–139 Srawley. Especially *Or. cat.* 26, which I have already quoted extensively, is most relevant to the issue of purification by fire and universal restoration. In this passage it is also clear that Gregory includes apokatastasis (even in its most radical form, contemplating the eventual restoration of the devil), not in a group of esoteric doctrines, but among the teachings aimed at the instruction of all Christians alike. From this passage it is manifest that the purification by fire, the therapy of the spiritually ill, and universal apokatastasis are made possible, according to Gregory, by *Christ* and especially by his inhumanation, which performed the union between humanity and divinity. This was the only way for human nature to be liberated from evil. Origen too, whose Christological foundation for the doctrine of apokatastasis is clear,<sup>308</sup> expressed admiration and reverence for the incarnation of the Son of God,<sup>309</sup> for instance in *Princ.* 2,6,1–2.<sup>310</sup> The necessity of Christ's inhumanation for all humanity's salva-

<sup>308</sup> Demonstration in my "Origen and Apokatastasis: A Reassessment."

<sup>309</sup> See my "Gesù Cristo come entità mostruosa e ibrida."

<sup>310</sup> "It is impossible to write down all that which concerns the glory of the Saviour [...] Seized by admiration, we wonder how this nature, the supreme above all others, emptying itself from its condition of majesty, turned into a human being and lived among humans [...] Among all its great miracles, one fills human mind with admiration, beyond every capacity. Human intellect cannot grasp how so great power of the divine majesty, the Logos and

tion and therefore apokatastasis is also evident in *Dial. c. Her.* 7: "Thus, our Saviour and Lord, wanting to save the human race, as indeed he has wanted to do, for this reason has wanted to save the body as well as the soul, and moreover has wanted to save what still remained of the human being, that is, the spirit. Now, the human being could not have been saved as a whole [ὅλος ἄνθρωπος], if Christ had not *taken up humanity in its wholeness* [ὅλον τὸν ἄνθρωπον]." Likewise, for Gregory the pivot of the Christological foundation of apokatastasis lies in Christ's inhumanation. Gregory expresses this most clearly in *Or. Cat.* 32, in which he echoes Origen (especially CC 3,28): Christ has assumed human nature in its totality; therefore, all of it participates in the liberation from evil and the union with the divinity that Christ has realised with his incarnation, death, and resurrection and which will be full in the *telos*. The Logos assumed humanity in order to die and died in order to be resurrected and to transmit life to mortal humanity (mortal not only in respect to physical death, but above all in respect to the death of the soul). Gregory, who takes over Irenaeus's and Athanasius's soteriology,<sup>311</sup> together with Origen's, grounds his soteriology in Christ's mediation and solidarity with humanity, proclaimed by 1 Tim 2:5. This text is dear to Gregory, who cites it frequently. As Gregory puts it in *De perf.* GNO VIII,1, 203–207, the Logos, by assuming a human body and soul, assumes human nature entirely through its ἀπαρχαί, which it sanctifies, and thus in these ἀπαρχαί it sanctifies the whole φύραμα of human nature.<sup>312</sup>

Exactly as Origen did, arguing for the universal and eternal validity of Christ's sacrifice,<sup>313</sup> Gregory too used priestly terminology in abundance in reference to Christ's sacrifice, which ultimately allows for universal apokatastasis. For instance, he describes this sacrifice in terms of sanctification

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Wisdom of God the Father, in which all visible and invisible things were created, could limit itself into the human being who appeared in Judaea, and the Wisdom of God could enter the bosom of a woman and be born as a baby, and cry as a newborn. We cannot understand how it could be disturbed before death [...] and finally be dragged to the most ignominious death for humans, although he was resurrected on the third day." Origen's admiration for Christ's Incarnation and Crucifixion is stated again soon after: "To present this concept to human ears and explain it by demonstration overcomes by far the ability of my intelligence and word. I even suspect that it exceeds the apostles' ability; perhaps the explanation of this mystery exceeds the faculty of all heavenly creatures."

<sup>311</sup> For instance, the idea that the death of Christ is a necessary passage to arrive at his resurrection, which can thereby be communicated to human beings, comes from Athanasius (esp. *De inc. Verb.* 44).

<sup>312</sup> On the unity of human nature in Gregory see J. Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance* (Leiden, 2000).

<sup>313</sup> See my "The Universal and Eternal Validity."

and redemption, ἁγιασμός and ἀπολύτρωσις, performed by Christ in his capacity as great High Priest (ἀρχιερεὺς μέγας), propitiatory victim (ἱλαστήριον), a mediator between God and humankind (GNO VII,1, 175–176). Drawing on Paul and Origen at the same time, Gregory presents Christ as a priest who did not offer an animal victim in sacrifice, but himself, by immolating himself as our Easter (*De perf.* GNO VIII/1, 186–187). The priestly and sacrificial terminology, grounded in Pauline passages,<sup>314</sup> frequently occurs in Gregory, for instance in *CE* 3, GNO II 140, where Christ is said to have appeased God for our sins as a priest, ἱερατικῶς ἱλεωσάμενος; *De tr. sp.* GNO IX 286–288. The same set of notions recurs in his Paschal homilies, which are devoted to Christ's *descensus ad inferos* and resurrection. Gregory relates Christ's priesthood to his sacrifice, the Last Supper, and the Eucharist: Christ, priest and sacrificial lamb at the same time, during the Last Supper anticipated his sacrificial act (ἱεουργία), by giving himself for us as a sacrificial offering (προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν; *De tr. sp.* GNO IX, 286–288). In this connection, the glorious symbolism of Christ's Cross—an instrument of sacrifice and exaltation at the same time—is at the centre of history both for Gregory and for Origen. In *Or. cat.* 32, Christ, by outstretching his arms on the cross, is said to have embraced and unified all, and attracted all to himself (John 12:32). This is why his Cross can be seen as a recapitulation, ἀνακεφαλαίωσις (*De tr. sp.* GNO IX, 1298–303; *CE* 3, GNO II, 121–122). The Christological foundation of this recapitulation and, as a consequence, of the eventual restoration or apokatastasis is evident both at the end of Gregory's homily on the Ascension, where Christ is presented as the recapitulator of the universe, and in *Contr. c. Apoll.* 55, GNO III/2, 224–226. Gregory bases himself on three fundamental texts, the first two belonging to the Pauline tradition and the third to a Petrine discourse, which already Origen had interpreted in reference to the universal restoration: Eph 1:10, on Christ who recapitulates all things; Col 1:8, on Christ as the first and the principle of everything; and Acts 3:21, on the second, eschatological coming of Christ, which will bring about “universal restoration,” ἀποκατάστασις πάντων.<sup>315</sup> In *Ascens.* 327 Gregory explicitly joins universal recapitulation and universal restoration in Christ, who “has *recapitulated all* in himself, who ranks first among all, he who has *restored all* [ἀποκαταστήσας τὰ πάντα] to the first creation.” The death and resurrection of Christ is not only the model, but also the *cause* of human resurrection

<sup>314</sup> E.g., 1 Tim 2:6–9; 1 Cor 1:30; 5:7; 6:20; Eph 5:2; Hebr 4:14; 7:11. Of course, Gregory did not distinguish between Pauline and Ps. Pauline letters.

<sup>315</sup> See discussion above, in the Ch. 1.

and restoration. The power of Christ's risen body transmits the resurrection to all humanity, which Christ has assumed with his incarnation (*In S. Pascha* GNO IX 245–253; *Or. cat.* 37, GNO III/4, 93–95). After death, his body was in the tomb and his soul in hell, while the Logos was with God as ever, but on the third day the resurrection united again the elements that death had separated (*De tr. sp.* GNO IX, 280–294, with a notion that was already present in Origen's *Dialogue with Heraclides*). Because the body and soul of Christ kept adhering to Christ's divinity, his body remained uncorrupted in the grave and his soul survived in hell. Thus, Christ was really *in* (ἐν) death, but not *under its power* (ὑπό). Indeed, Gregory, like Origen, thought that Christ assumed not only a human body, but also a human soul and intellect (*Antirrh.* GNO III/1 173, 177, and 195).

Jesus's very choice of the cross for his sacrificial death includes, according to Gregory, a universal symbolism which fits his apokatastasis doctrine. In *CE* GNO II 120,25–29, Gregory sees in the cross not a sign of weakness, but, like Paul, the manifestation of God's power (1 Cor 1:18) and glory (Gal 6:14). And Eph 3:18 provides Gregory with the framework for his universalistic interpretation: the four dimensions of the Cross, indicated by its four arms, make it clear that “all heavenly and infernal realities and the extremes of all that exists are governed and kept together by the One who in the figure of the Cross has manifested this great and ineffable power” (*CE* GNO II 121–122). In *De tridui spatio* Gregory likewise meditates on the cosmic symbolism of the Cross, deducing from it the universality of this salvific power (a tenet of Origen's stauology as well; Eph 3:18 was already interpreted by Origen as a reference to apokatastasis [*restitutio*], performed by Christ, in *Hom. in Gen.* 2,5). First he asks why Christ's sacrifice took place just on the Cross and not in another way (GNO IX,1 298–299) and he replies that Paul “saw that this figure of the Cross, divided into four arms that stretch out from the central crossing, indicates the omnipresent power and providence of the One who was manifested upon it. This is why Paul uses a particular name for every arm: he calls ‘depth’ that which is located below the centre of the cross; ‘height’ that which extends over the centre; and ‘breadth’ and ‘length’ those which are outstretched on the one side and the other of the crossing. It seems to me that with these words the discourse clearly manifests that there is *no being that is not found under the providence of divine nature*, most absolutely, above heaven, under the earth, and up to the extreme limits of all that exists” (ibid. 300–301). The omnipresence of God's Providence, which δὲ πάντων διήκει, is a thought that is typical of Gregory, from *De anima* to his last writings. Soon after, Gregory adds a reference to Psalm 138:7–9, which he interprets as an allusion to the universality of the Cross: “You are the one who

permeates all, becoming the link [σύνδεσμος] of all, uniting in yourself all the extreme limits: You are above and are present below, your hand is posited on one extreme and your right hand governs on the other.” The Cross as a symbol of Christ’s universal power seems to derive both from Irenaeus (*Dem.* 34) and from Origen, who not only underlined the universal effectiveness of Christ’s cross,<sup>316</sup> but also influenced Athanasius, who described the Cross as a revelation of the divinity and power of Christ, referring to John 12:32 in *De inc.* 25. Origen’s influence on Gregory’s description is clear from the very reference to 1 Cor 15:28, at the end of Gregory’s treatment in *De tr. sp.* GNO IX 303,2–12: “By means of the figure of the Cross the Godhead indicates its power, which keeps all beings in its custody. This is why Scripture says that it was necessary that the Son of the Human Being not, simply, “should die,” but “should be crucified,” that, for those who are more insightful, the cross could become proclaimer of the Logos of God [θεολόγος], because in its form it proclaims the omnipotent lordship of the One who has offered himself on it, and who is ‘all in all.’” It is from the inhumanation and Cross of Christ that there begins the realisation of the process that will culminate at the eventual apokatastasis, when God will come to be “all in all.”

Like Origen, and mindful of Paul (1 Corinthians and Romans), Gregory insists on the Adam-Christ parallel in his discourse on the foundations of apokatastasis. If death entered the world due to the sin of one human, another human’s obedience heals the consequences of that disobedience, and by means of his resurrection all humanity rises with him; thus, Christ annihilates the death that had been brought about by Adam’s sin (*Contr. c. Apoll.* 21, GNO III,1, 160–161). Both Adam and Christ can recapitulate all humanity because humanity is a unity, a whole. This is a concept that Origen had already hammered home in his anti-Valentinian polemic. Throughout his *In illud* Gregory identifies the body of Christ with the whole of humanity, therefore also identifying the Church, which is the body of Christ, with all humanity at least in the perspective of the *telos*. I have demonstrated elsewhere how this notion is drawn from Origen,<sup>317</sup> and how Gregory relies on Origen for his core argument that the salvific submission of Christ to the Father refers, not to Christ’s own divinity, but to his “body,” that is, all human beings.<sup>318</sup> This constellation of concepts rests on a strong basic notion of the unity of human nature, which, in Gregory’s words, forms one and the same “lump” or “mass” (φύραμα), one and the same “fullness” or “totality”

<sup>316</sup> See my “The Universal and Eternal Validity.”

<sup>317</sup> Ramelli, “Clement’s Notion of the Logos.”

<sup>318</sup> See my “*In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*.”

(πλήρωμα). This unity is, not by accident, especially emphasised by Gregory in connection with the unity of humanity at its first creation and the unity that will be restored in the final apokatastasis. In *Hom. op.* 22,3 this strongly inclusive point of view is highlighted as for the creation:

The human being was then created in the image of God: what must be understood is that it is the universal nature [ἡ καθόλου φύσις] that is what is similar to God. Not *a part of the whole* [μέρος τοῦ ὅλου], but *the whole totality of human nature all together* [ἅπας ἄνθρωπος τὸ τῆς φύσεως πλήρωμα] was created in this way by the omnipotent Wisdom [...] When the text of Scripture says that God created “the human being,” with the indeterminate character of this designation it indicates *the whole of humanity*. Indeed, in this passage the creature is not yet called “Adam” [...] The name of the created human being [ἄνθρωπος] *is not particular, but universal*. Therefore, from the universal denomination of the nature we are led to think that *the whole of humanity was included* by God’s foreknowledge and power *in the first creation* [...] *The whole totality* [πλήρωμα] *of humanity was included, as it were, in a single body* by the foreknowing power of the God of the universe: this is what Scripture teaches when it says that God created the human being and created it in the image of God.

The totality of humanity was included in the first human being, and it is included in Christ as well. It is not simply the individual human being that is in the image of God, but also, and primarily, the full totality of humanity. The full realisation of this being in the image of God will take place at the eventual apokatastasis, when the totality of human nature will be reconstituted into its perfect unity and will make up “the body of Christ.” Besides his *In illud*, also Gregory’s *De perfectione* and Homily 15 on the Song of Songs contain his most relevant reflections on the Church as the body of Christ, and at the same time as subsuming all humanity in itself, at least from the eschatological viewpoint. This super-body lives by its union with its Head, who is Christ, whose life is shared by the body itself (*De perf.* GNO VIII,1, 197–198). This is because the body shares the same substance and nature with its Head. And since the whole human nature, the body of Christ, “forms, so to say, one and the same animated being,” the resurrection of one, i.e. Christ, “extends itself to the whole totality” (*Or. cat.* GNO III,4, 78). In Homily 13 on the Song of Songs Gregory states that the very foundation of the world was aimed at the formation of the body of Christ (GNO VI 384,18–21). Indeed, the world will come to an end when the number of human beings will be completed, and the body of Christ will be entirely built up. The perfection of this body will be reached in the *telos*, when every part of it has been made perfect. Then every single part will perfectly reflect all the characteristics of the Head; thus, if the Head is Peace, Holiness,

and Truth, all the parts, too, will be peace, holiness, and truth (*De perf.* GNO VIII,1, 197–200). In Homily 15 on the Song of Songs Gregory emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit in the formation of the unity of the body of Christ, that for which Jesus prays in John 17:21–23 (a pivotal text for Origen's notion of eschatological unity as well).<sup>319</sup> Gregory cites Eph 4:3–4 and sees the accomplishment of the unity of the body of Christ in the transformation of all into one body and one spirit. On account of its participation in the whole, “even the weakest part, thanks to the spiritual harmony of the whole, is stronger than those which are corrupt and separate” (*CE* GNO I 25). This separation, however, is temporary and will not endure in the *telos*. Once all have been corrected and perfected, nobody will be corrupt or separate any more; therefore, nobody will remain outside the body of Christ, i.e. outside the number of the saved: μηδὲν ἔξω τῶν σωζομένων, in the already quoted *In illud* 21 Downing.

The passages in which Gregory reflects on the unity of humanity in the eventual apokatastasis are many and come from all periods of his production, thus testifying to the importance of this point in his thought. Besides *In illud*, *De perfectione*, and the Homilies on the Song of Songs, one can consider *De mort.* 20, p. 74,1–3 Lozza, in which the idea of Christ-Logos as the transcendent unity of multiplicity (an idea that was at work in Clement and Origen)<sup>320</sup> is developed and joined with that of “Christ's body”:

I do not doubt that there will be one and the same race, *made up by all* [γένος ἔσται τῶν πάντων ἓν], when all of us will constitute the one body of Christ [ἓν σῶμα Χριστοῦ οἱ πάντες], formed with one and the same stamp, when the image of God will shine forth *in all* to the same degree [πᾶσι κατὰ τὸ ἴσον].

The unity of all humanity will clearly be achieved in Christ and perfected in the eventual apokatastasis. Indeed, this will be able to take place only when the totality (πλήρωμα) of humanity, which was created in the first creation as a whole, will have been reached in the second as well. Then, and only then, will all achieve perfection and humanity will be transformed (*Hom. op.* 22):

When the transformation of all [τῇ μεταβολῇ τοῦ ὅλου] will take place, then human nature, too, will be transformed, from earthly corruptibility to impassibility and eternity [ἀϊδιον] [...] when the totality—as I believe—of human nature [τοῦ πληρώματος τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως] will have reached its completion according to the measure foreknown (by God): then, since nothing more will be lacking from the increment of the number of souls, in a blink, the transformation of the beings [τὴν ἐναλλαγὴν τῶν ὄντων] will take place.

<sup>319</sup> See the *Novum Testamentum Patristicum* volume on John 13–17, in preparation.

<sup>320</sup> See my “Clement's Notion of the Logos.”

In *De an.* 129BC and 152A as well, Gregory places the resurrection and apokatastasis at the fulfilment of the totality (πλήρωμα) of human nature and identifies them with the aim (σκοπός) of God:

When our nature, on the basis of a given order and consequentiality, has completely accomplished its path through the periodical movement of time, at last there will stop this flux that perpetuates itself thanks to the succession of creatures that continually appear, and, since the fullness of totality, once completed, will no longer admit of any increment, the whole sum of the souls, complete and perfect, from the condition of invisibility and dispersion in which it is now found, will return again to a state of unitary integrity and manifestation [...] But once God has brought again human nature to the original condition of the human being through the resurrection, it would be otiose to think that *God's power is prevented by such obstacles from the attainment of its goal* [σκοπός]. And *its goal is one and only one*: after the realisation, through each single human being, of the full totality—when some will be found to have been already purified from evil during the present life, while others will have been *healed by means of fire* for the given periods, and yet others will have not even tasted, in this life, either good or evil to the same extent—, *to bestow on all the participation in the goods that are in the Godhead*, of which Scripture says that no eye has ever seen and no ear has heard them, nor are they graspable through reasoning. Now, this, I think, is nothing but *coming to be in the Godhead* itself.

According to Gregory, God's aim is universal apokatastasis and θέωσις, the return of all human (and rational) beings to God and their participation in the goods of God, who is the Good itself and the source and sum of all goods. Gregory is clear that nothing will impede the attainment of this goal, which is also proclaimed in 1Tim 2:4–6. He moreover explains that God's aim will be fulfilled in different ways and times: some will have been already purified in this life, others will still need purification in the other world, and yet others, who died young, will not even have had experience of moral choices. All of these will be instructed and purified if needed, in order to attain the goods that God wants to bestow on them. The case of those who will never attain purification, not even in the next world, is simply *not* contemplated. As I have mentioned, however, it is in Gregory's *In illud* that the connection between the unity of human nature, Christ's inhumanation, and the eventual universal apokatastasis is most strongly highlighted and best articulated. This connection rests on the identification between the body of Christ and all of humanity. This premise, together with the exegesis of 1Cor 15:28 on the universal submission/salvation of the "body of Christ," leads Gregory to the aforementioned conclusion: "no being will remain outside the number of the saved" (μηδὲν ἔξω τῶν σωζομένων, GNO III/2, 21,2–3).



Not only the inhumanation of Christ, but also his resurrection is necessary for apokatastasis in Gregory's view. This is because Christ's resurrection—which is the resurrection of the “body of Christ,” i.e. of all of humanity—includes the resurrection of the whole of human nature. And this resurrection is for Gregory inseparable from the restoration, as I have pointed out. Therefore, universal resurrection, which is already done in Christ, is the premise for universal restoration. As Gregory explains in *Or. Cat.* 16, with his resurrection Christ has united again in a perpetual communion the two natures, intelligible and sense-perceptible, that in humanity had become separated. This reunion does not simply take place at an individual level, but at the level of the whole human race (γενικωτέρῳ τινὶ λόγῳ). The aim of Christ's resurrection, he explains, was “to recall back the original grace [πρώτη χάρις] that belongs to human nature, and thus allow us to return to the absolutely eternal life,” τὴν ἀίδιον ζωὴν. Once again Gregory, sticking to a rigorous linguistic distinction that was already typical of the Bible and Origen and is found in other Fathers as well, refers ἀίδιος to the eternal life—here and elsewhere—, thus indicating that it will be *absolutely eternal*, whereas he *never* refers ἀίδιος to death, punishment or fire in the world to come, clearly because he does not regard these as eternal. To these he only applies the Biblical αἰώνιος, which never means “eternal” unless it refers to God.<sup>321</sup> The unity of human nature is the foundation of the universality of the resurrection and apokatastasis: “Because the totality of the whole human nature forms, so to say, one living being [ένός τινος ὄντος ζώου], the resurrection of one part of it [sc. Christ] extends to the whole, and, in conformity with the *continuity and unity of the (human) nature* [κατὰ τὸ συνεχές τε καὶ ένωμένον τῆς φύσεως], passes on from the part to the whole” (*Or. cat.* 32).

Indeed, the idea of the totality of human nature as one living being allows Gregory to explain how death could pass on from Adam to all humans and how restoration can pass on from Christ to all humans. Thus, in *In illud*,<sup>32</sup> Downing Gregory cites St. Paul: “Just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be vivified” (1 Cor 15:22), which he also comments on in *Or. cat.* 16:

Just as the principle of death, becoming operative in the case of one human being, from it passed on to the whole human nature, likewise the principle of the resurrection, from one human being, and through it, extends to the whole of humanity.

And Gregory means this resurrection and vivification, not only as the resurrection of the body, but also as a full restoration, in line with his *anastasis*—

<sup>321</sup> See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, chapter on Gregory.

*apokatastasis* connection I have already pointed out.<sup>322</sup> For he reads 1 Cor 15:22 in the light of Rom 5:18–10: “Just as, because of one transgression, there came the condemnation of all humans, so also, thanks to one act of justice, *for all humans will the justification come that brings about life*. For, just as due to the disobedience of one human being the whole mass became sinner, so also, thanks to the obedience of one human, have all been made just.”

In his last work Gregory will insist again that to the whole human nature, qua united by the bond of unity (again with reference to John 17), there extends not only the resurrection, but also the glory of the Spirit, which brings it to perfection:

“That all may be one; just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, so may also they be one in us” [John 17:21]. And the bond of this unity is the glory. Now, no sensible person could deny that it is the Holy Spirit who is called “Glory,” if one takes into consideration the words of the Lord; for he says: “The glory that you have given me I have given them” [John 17:22]. Having taken up human nature, he received the glory he possessed from eternity, from before the world existed. And because this human nature was glorified by the Spirit [sc. in Christ], the communication of the glory of the Spirit has taken place on all that which belongs to the same nature [πάν τὸ συγγενές], beginning from the disciples.  
(*Hom. in Cant.* GNO VI 467,2–17)

Gregory has recourse to the argument of the unity of the whole human nature in Christ, by whom the “mass” of humanity is joined to the Father, also in *De perf.* GNO VIII/1, 197 and 206:

by assuming in body and soul the first fruits of the common nature, [the Son] has sanctified it, preserving it in himself pure from every evil and uncontaminated, to consecrate it in incorruptibility to the Father of incorruptibility, and to attract to himself, through it, *all that belongs to the same species by nature* [πάν τὸ συγγενές κατὰ τὴν φύσιν] and is of the same family [ὁμόφυλον], to readmit those disinherited to the *inheritance of filial adoption*, God’s enemies to *the participation in his divinity*.

Those who were disinherited are all humans after their fall; the enemies of God are likewise the post-lapsarian human beings, perhaps also the rebel

<sup>322</sup> Robin Orton, “Reassembly, Purification or Restoration: The Resurrection of the Body in St Gregory of Nyssa,” *Studia Patristica* 52 (2012), 185–196, on *De mortuis* and *De anima et resurrectione*, argues that Gregory treats death and resurrection in three distinct ways: 1) our risen bodies will be reassembled from the elements of our earthly bodies and reunited with our immortal souls; 2) the bodies will be purified (by fire) from the animality of fallen human nature; 3) the resurrection is the restoration of human beings to their original condition. I tend to see compatibility between 3) and the two other scenarios, in that Gregory simply sees resurrection as double, of body and soul together; 3) does not exclude the resurrection of the body.

angels. At the end of this passage the eventual apokatastasis of all humans and possibly angels is presented as a θέωσις. Gregory insists on the notion of συγγένεια of all humankind and between humankind and Christ in *De perf.* GNO VIII/1, 197–198: “Whoever has known that Christ is the Head of the Church should first consider that every head is of the same nature and substance of the body that is subject to it, and there is one connaturality [συμφύῳ], as one harmony actualises a conformity of sentiment between the parts and the whole. Therefore, if anything is external to the body, it is also totally external to the Head. With this, the reasoning teaches us that every limb must become what the Head is by nature to be intimately united with the Head itself.” The category of συγγένεια was already used by Origen to indicate the bond existing between the soul and God, for instance in *Princ.* 3,1,13, where he states that the Godhead “created the intellectual nature incorruptible and akin [συγγενές] to itself.” Origen explains the nature of this συγγένεια in *Princ.* 4,4,9: the intellectual soul participates in the intelligibility, incorruptibility, and immortality of God, and this is also why it is in the image of God. In 4,4,10 the Latin term *consanguineitatem* surely translates συγγένεια. It is through this category, and specifically with the συγγένεια between Christ and all human beings, that Gregory can motivate “the common salvation of human nature”:

But the only-begotten Son of God himself resurrects the human being that is united to himself, by separating the soul from the body and then uniting them again. In this way, the *common* [κοινή] *salvation of human nature* is achieved. This is why he is also called the Initiator of Life [ἀρχηγὸς ζωῆς]. Indeed, the Only-Begotten God, by dying for us and rising again, has reconciled the universe to himself, ransoming by means of his flesh and blood, as war prisoners, all of us who participate in him through a bond of blood [διὰ τοῦ συγγενοῦς ἡμῶν αἵματος].  
(*Contr. c. Apoll.* GNO III/1, 154)

Christ’s συγγένεια with humanity is a συγγένεια of body and soul together, since Christ took up both (Gregory agrees with Origen also in this respect). As a consequence, when Christ “resurrects the human being that is united to himself,” he performs not only the bodily resurrection of all human beings, but also their *spiritual* resurrection, by which humanity is restored to the Good, i.e. God. This is how Gregory’s holistic concept of resurrection relates to his idea of συγγένεια between Christ and humanity. Another important and related notion, that of οἰκείωσις, was Christianised and exploited by Origen and Gregory in relation to both anthropology and apokatastasis.<sup>323</sup>

<sup>323</sup> See the aforementioned forthcoming study on *oikeiōsis* in Gregory.

In *Or. cat.* 32, too, where Gregory describes apokatastasis as the eventual σύμπνοια and ἁρμονία, he explains how the resurrection of the whole of humanity is enabled by the resurrection of Christ, who has the same nature as all humanity.<sup>324</sup> Gregory reflects on this salvific mystery while commenting on Acts 2:33, “lifted up to the right hand of God”: “God has no need to be lifted up, being the Most High. The apostle, therefore, says that what is human has been lifted up, and it has been lifted up becoming ‘Lord and Christ.’ This is why he became so only after the Passion” (*CE* 3, GNO II 123). It is in Christ that humans become God, in a θέωσις that will be fully realised in the eventual apokatastasis, when “the human being surpasses its nature by becoming, from mortal, immortal, from corruptible, incorruptible, from ephemeral, absolutely eternal [ἀίδιος]; in a word, from human being *becoming God* [θεός]. For one who has received the honour of becoming Son of God will surely possess the dignity of the Father, and inherits all the goods of the Father” (*De beat.* GNO VII/2, 151). The eschatological unity of all humanity in God in its θέωσις is also described in *De mortuis*<sup>325</sup> and *De beatitudinibus*: “Because the divine nature is contemplated as simple, without composition, and impossible to represent in a shape, when *the human race*, too, thanks to this work of peace, is liberated from its double composition [*sc.* of body and soul], and perfectly returns to the Good, once it has become simple and impossible to represent in a shape, truly *one thing* [ἀληθῶς ἓν], so that what appears [*sc.* the body] is the same as what is hidden [*sc.* the soul/spirit]

<sup>324</sup> “Since it was necessary that our whole nature be lifted up from death, as if outstretching a hand toward the one who was lying down, bending down over our corpse, Christ came so close to death as to touch the mortal condition and provide in his own body a principle of resurrection to human nature, *lifting up all together, with his power/force* [τῇ δυνάμει], *the whole of humanity*. Indeed, the human being [*sc.* Jesus] who received God [ὁ θεοδόχος ἄνθρωπος] and was lifted up in the resurrection together with the divinity did not have a different origin than that of the mass [φύραμα] of our nature. [...] Thus, as though the whole human nature were one single living being, *the resurrection of one member propagates to the whole*, thanks to the conjunction and unity of human nature.” I render τῇ δυνάμει with “with his power” and not with “potentially”; the context and the presence of the definite article advocate the former rendering. The metaphor itself suggests this meaning: Christ with his mighty hand, outstretched toward humanity’s corpse, pulls it up and vivifies it. The rendering “potentially” is chosen by G. Maspero, *Trinity and Man* (Leiden, 2007), 22, and opposed to “in actuality,” in the sense that the resurrection can be actualised only through baptism. Baptism is indeed essential to salvation, but Gregory does not exclude from salvation those who have not received it in this life: they will have to receive purification through fire in the other world. See my “Baptism in Gregory of Nyssa’s Theology.”

<sup>325</sup> “The same grace will shine forth in all as the sun, so that each one will give joy to the other and will receive joy, in the reciprocal contemplation of the perfect Beauty of each one” (GNO IX 66, 10–16).

and what is hidden is the same as what appears, then truly beatitude is brought to completion, and these humans are properly called ‘children of God,’ proclaimed blessed according to the promise of Jesus Christ our Lord’ (GNO VIII/2, 160–161). Deification also implies the unification of body and soul—a tenet that will be borne in mind by Evagrius—and of all humanity.<sup>326</sup>

Not only humanity, but all of creation becomes one body at apokatastasis. This is clear, e.g., from *In illud* 20 Downing: “When *the whole of creation* has been made harmonic with itself, and before Christ every knee will have bowed, of heavenly, earthly, and hellish creatures, and every tongue will proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Lord, then, when *the whole of creation has become one body*, and all beings, though obedience, will have become in Christ of one and the same nature with one another, then Christ ascribes to himself the submission of his body to the Father.” This comes to imply that the whole of creation is “the body of Christ” (the cosmic Christ, which was also found in Bardaisan in a passage known to Porphyry<sup>327</sup>). Gregory’s universalism is radical and explicitly stated; “no being,” absolutely “nothing” will remain outside the number of the saved (*In illud* 21 Downing). Origen too, albeit less emphatically than Gregory, encompassed the whole creation in apokatastasis, for instance in *Princ.* 3,5,4.<sup>328</sup> In *Comm. in Rom.* 4,7,3 Origen declares that “the Logos operates for the restoration of the world and the renewal *of the whole creation*, which has been restored by the Lord’s resurrection.” And *ibid.* 2,4,5, he identifies the τέλος with “the conversion to God and the transformation of the whole world.” The same τέλος in CC 4,99 is described as “the return *of the whole universe* to God.”

The close connection between apokatastasis and unity in Gregory’s thought parallels the unity that the soul must achieve in its spiritual progress. The *telos* of this progress, the unification of the soul,<sup>329</sup> is seen as a restoration of the soul to its original condition. Before the fall, the soul was

<sup>326</sup> On the importance of θέωσις in Gregory, in spite of the relative scarcity of the relevant technical vocabulary in his works, see M. Laird, “Gregory of Nyssa and Divinization: A Reconsideration,” *Studia Patristica* 47 (2010) 38–43, with whose thesis I agree. Indeed, I think Gregory sees apokatastasis as θέωσις.

<sup>327</sup> See my *Bardaisan of Edessa*, 107–126.

<sup>328</sup> “The whole creation hopes for liberation, to be liberated from the bonds of corruption, when the children of God, who had fallen and spread away, will have been collected again into unity, and when the others will have performed in this world the rest of their duty, which only God knows, the Creator of all things.” Indeed, “God’s Logos [...] extends not only to human beings, but also to realities that are deemed much inferior and ruled by nature” (CC 6,71).

<sup>329</sup> A Plotinian theme: *Enn.* 6,9,3,11–12; 6,9,10,10–12.

simple and unitary, μονοειδής (*De an.* 81B), and so must it return to being: "When the soul becomes simple [ἀπλή], unitary [μονοειδής], and perfectly similar to God [θεοεικελος], it will find the truly simple and immaterial Good" (*De an.* 93C). This unification is made possible, once again, only by Christ, in that it is in Christ that human nature finds its unity and is united to the divinity: "by participating in the purest being, human weakness is transformed into what is better and stronger [τὸ κρείττον] [...] human smallness is united to divine greatness" (*CE III* 4). In the union, it is not the case that the divine nature is affected by the defects of human nature, but it is rather the latter that receives divine perfection. This notion that it is the superior component that assimilates the inferior to itself was already embraced by Origen, *Dial. c. Her.* 12 and *passim*: within the human being, the inferior nature must assimilate itself to the superior, which is in the image of God. This idea will return prominently in Eriugena, in connection with apokatastasis, as I shall show. For Gregory, the assimilation of human nature to the divine will take place in the eventual apokatastasis: "The two must become one, and the conjunction will consist in a transformation into the better nature [τὸ κρείττον]" (*De beat.* 7). For apokatastasis will be the θέωσις of humanity. This also was a notion dear to Origen, who described apokatastasis in terms of θέωσις for instance in *De or.* 27,13 (θεοποιηθῶμεν), in *Comm. in Matt.* 17,32 (θεοποιηθῆναι), or in *Ex. ad mart.* 35, where it is the Logos who deifies (ἀπὸ τοῦ Λόγου θεοποιηθεῖσι); in terms of "communion with the divine" (ἡ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον κοινωνία) in *CC* 3,80, and in terms of "becoming God" (γίγνεσθαι θεόν) in *Sel. in Ps.* 2369.

For Gregory, just as for Origen, the doctrine of apokatastasis is not in contrast with each rational creature's free will and responsibility. Each *logikon* must come to adhere to the Good *voluntarily*, after a process of improvement, illumination, and purification. All rational creatures are free to orient themselves toward good or evil; only God is pure Good and stable in the Good (*De an.* 120C;<sup>330</sup> *Or. cat.* 7; *Hom. in Eccl.* 8; *Hom. in Cant.* 2). In *Hom. op.* 16 Gregory affirms the freedom of rational creatures, also citing Plato's statement in his myth of Er at the end of the *Republic*, ἀρετὴ δὲ ἀδέσποτον.<sup>331</sup> This

<sup>330</sup> "Moral evil is not anterior to life, and it is not from it that our nature derived its first origin, but what initiated our life is God's Wisdom, which governs everything; the human soul, then, after reaching existence as the Creator wants, by means of its free will chooses whatever she deems good, thanks to the faculty of free choice she possesses, thus becoming whatever she wants."

<sup>331</sup> "There is in us a principle of every excellence, virtue, and wisdom, and of all the noble things we can conceive of. But the most important of all is that we are *free from necessity* [τὸ ἐλεύθερον ἀνάγκης εἶναι] and subject to no natural power, but we possess free

claim is so dear to him that he cites it also in the above-quoted crucial passage of *De an.* 101C–104A, in which otherworldly purification is presented as a restoration of freedom in virtue after enslavement to sin and the full restoration of God's image in each one. This connection between human freedom and the image of God is also expressed in *Hom. op.* 4, where moreover Plato's definition of virtue as something ἀδέσποτον surfaces again: "The human soul proves its loyal and lofty nature, far from ordinary misery, from which it is utterly separate, in that *it has no masters* and has power over itself, governing itself in an autonomous way, according to its will. Now, this is proper of whom but a sovereign? [...] It has been created in the image of the Nature that rules over all beings," God. That human nature is free qua image of God is also emphasised by Gregory in his Homily 4 on Ecclesiastes, where he declares slavery inadmissible for this very reason.<sup>332</sup> Far from being annihilated by God's omnipresent Providence, human capacity for free choices is always present (the same was maintained by Origen). This is why in *De inf.* GNO III/2, 82,7–17 Gregory affirms that everyone receives the fruits of his or her good or bad choices, like one who has followed the physician's instructions or not; all will experience the "fruits of their choice." Free will, a gift from God, is "the noblest and most precious of blessings" (*Or. cat.* 5). In *De mort.* 15 Gregory asks whether it would not have been useful to spare evil to humans by turning them toward the Good even against their will (ἄκοντας), but he responds that this would have meant depriving them of their dignity of "images of God." For since God has αὐτεξούσιον, its image too must have it. The same answer to the same question was provided by Bardaisan at the beginning of the *Liber legum regionum*, which in its Greek version was known to Gregory.<sup>333</sup> Bardaisan's interlocutor asks: "if God is one—as you maintain—and has created humans, and wants you to do whatever is prescribed to you, why has not God created us humans in such a way that we could not sin, but we might always do what is good? For in this way his will would be realised." Bardaisan replies: "if the human being had been created in this way, it would be nothing per se, but would be the instrument of the one, whoever this may be, who moved it [...] But the Godhead, in its benevolence, did not want to create the human being like this, but, thanks

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will [αὐτεξούσιον] and can decide however we deem best [πρὸς τὸ δοκοῦν ἔχειν τὴν γνῶμην]. For *virtue has no master* [ἀδέσποτον] and is *voluntary* [ἐκούσιον]: what is forced by compulsion and violence cannot be virtue."

<sup>332</sup> See my "Gregory Nyssen's Position in Late-Antique Debates on Slavery and Poverty."

<sup>333</sup> See Ramelli, *Bardaisan or Edessa*, 138–142.

to free will, has exalted it above many creatures, and has made it equal to the angels." The same full compatibility between rational creatures' free will and divine Providence leading to universal salvation was already a feature of Origen's thought, who elaborated his doctrine of apokatastasis in his polemic against Gnostic predestinationism and in defence of human free will.<sup>334</sup> This compatibility also seems to have been upheld by Bardaisan, who, as I have pointed out, in the same work (*Against Fate / Liber legum regionum*) supported both human free will as a gift of God, against determinism, and the doctrine of apokatastasis. "The plans conceived (by God) in order to help" God's creatures to be saved do not prevent creatures to govern themselves by their own will.

Both the Gospel and Plato—with the ethical intellectualism that, as I mentioned, Gregory embraced—taught Gregory that it is truth that makes one free. This principle is shared by Gregory, who envisages that the fullness of freedom will be realised in the eventual apokatastasis, when all have been purified and illuminated, so to attain "the knowledge of Truth" (cf. 1 Tim 2:4). Gregory indeed echoes 1 Tim 2:4 in *In illud* 23,15–18 Downing: the submission of the Son to the Father indicates "the acquired knowledge of the One who is [or: of what is, i.e. the truth] and the salvation of the whole human nature." In the eventual apokatastasis it will be impossible to fall again as in the original fall (which was due to deception, as I have pointed out analysing *Hom. op.* 20), because the illumination and knowledge achieved by everyone will make it impossible to mistake an evil for a good, as it happened in the beginning. Evil will be no more, because it will be no longer chosen by anyone. The path that leads to restoration is characterised by illumination, learning, and purification from the mind's obnubilation that is related to passions (as Gregory explains in *De anima*<sup>335</sup>). This is clear in *De mort.* 15, p. 64 Lozza:

Therefore, that *free mastery over ourselves* [ἐξουσία] *could remain* in our nature, but *evil might be removed* from it, divine Wisdom excogitated the following plan: allow the human being to do whatever it wanted and taste all the evils it wished, and thus *learn* from experience what it has preferred to the Good, and *then come back*, with its desire, to its original beatitude, *voluntarily* [ἐκουσίως], banishing from its own nature all that which is subject to passions and irrational, by purifying itself in the present life by means of meditation and philosophy, or by plunging, after death, into the purifying fire.

<sup>334</sup> See at least Ramelli, "La coerenza."

<sup>335</sup> See my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*.



Restoration has to be voluntary. Apokatastasis, Providence's work, does not eliminate freedom of will. This is what Origen also insisted upon: *manere quidem naturae rationabili semper liberum arbitrium non negamus, sed tantam esse vim crucis Christi et mortis huius* as to be sufficient for the rectification and salvation of all humans and all rational creatures in all aeons (*Comm. in Rom.* 4,10). Gregory is on the same line. Apokatastasis is the full manifestation of Christ-Logos, who dispels irrational passions and ignorance and persuades by reason: "When the form of this world has passed away and Christ has manifested himself to all, *persuading every soul who does not believe* and reducing to silence every blasphemous tongue [...], then all nations and peoples, even the most ancient, will kneel and offer a homage of submission" (*In S. Pascha* GNO IX 246).

In Gregory's view, just as in Plato's and Origen's, freedom is not the freedom to do evil, since those who do evil are enslaved to evil, but it is freedom from passions and evil, to fully adhere to the Good without obstacles, thus realising one's human, rational nature (i.e. to be in God's image and thus free):

The faculty of contemplation and discernment is typical of that part of the soul that is similar to God, because in these activities we apprehend what is *typical of the divinity*. Therefore, if, thanks to our solicitude in the present life or purification by fire in the future one, our soul will be able to *liberate itself from those which, among the emotions, are irrational* [sc. passions],<sup>336</sup> nothing will be left to prevent it from contemplating the Good. For *the Good is such as to attract, so to say, by its own nature, every being* that looks at it. Thus, if the soul can be purified from every sin, it will certainly stay in the Good. Now, the Good is by nature identical to the Divinity, with whom the soul will be united thanks to its pureness, in that it will be found joined to what is *proper and familiar to itself*. (*De an.* 89CD)

Note again the depiction of apokatastasis as *oikeiōsis*. The restoration of God's image in the human being—the heart of apokatastasis—will be achieved through knowledge (as well as through love, solicited by the attrac-

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<sup>336</sup> Passions (πάθη) are contrary to human rational nature; they are presented by Gregory in *De anima* as a kind of appendages or accretions that from outside attach themselves to the rational soul (full commentary in my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*). Interestingly, this characterisation was already proposed by Basilides, but in a different anthropological context: οἱ δ' ἀμφὶ τὸν Βασιλείδην προσαρτήματα τὰ πάθη καλεῖν εἰώθασι [...] προσηρημένα τῇ λογικῇ ψυχῇ (*Clem. Strom.* 2,20,112–113). Origen, instead, proposed it with a metaphor against the same anthropological backdrop as Gregory's, e.g. in *Hom. in Jer.* 1,14, where sins and passions are assimilated to evil plants that are planted in the human ἡγεμονικόν after and upon the good ones planted by God. Origen immediately adds that all those evil plants will have to be uprooted.

tiveness of the Good). Gregory cites Col 3:10 to this effect, both in *Hom. op.* 30 and in *CE* II 1: "you have put on the new nature, which is renewed in knowledge, in the image of the Creator."

Once again, Gregory, like Origen, thinks that freedom is knowledge, and sin is enslavement deriving from obnubilation, deception, mistake, and ultimately ignorance. The way to apokatastasis passes through a purification that is primarily instruction and illumination. Bardaisan too described apokatastasis as a result of a process of instruction, illumination, and rational persuasion: "there will come a time when even this capacity for harm that remains in them will be brought to an end by the *instruction* [*ywlpn'*] that will take place in a different arrangement of things. And, once that new world will be constituted, all evil movements will cease, all rebellions will come to an end, and the fools will be persuaded," not compelled, but persuaded and instructed. *Ywlpn'* indeed means "learning, instruction, education, doctrine." Apokatastasis will be made possible by instruction and the learning of the truth, which will be enabled by Christ-Logos.

This process of instruction, according to Gregory (and Origen), is not interrupted by one's physical death, because the intellectual soul—the image of God in a human being—does not cease to live after its separation from the mortal body, and at the resurrection it will receive an incorruptible body that will no longer be a hindrance to the intellectual activity. The door is always open for intellectual and moral improvement, and otherworldly suffering inflicted by God precisely aims at this. This continuity between the present and the future life is most evident in *De anima* and, even more, *De infantibus*: babies who died soon and could not have an intellectual development on earth will enjoy it in the other world, under the guidance of angels, and will reach the knowledge of the truth. Likewise in *Or. cat.* 8, purification in the other world is seen as a supplement to be applied in case it was not applied in this world: "the medication of virtue has been applied to the soul in the present life, in order to cure its wounds [*sc.* sins]. But if the soul does not heal, a therapy has been predisposed for it in the life that follows the present one." The therapeutic metaphor, dear to Clement and Origen, is found in a number of passages of Gregory, for instance in *Or. cat.* 26 on cauterisations and amputations as drastic and painful means of healing but applied with success by God with a therapeutic purpose. In the same work, indeed, Gregory declares that restoration to beatitude will take place immediately after the resurrection for those who have been already purified in this life, but those who have died still immersed in passions will have to be purified by fire before accessing beatitude "after long aeons," μακροῖς ὕστερον αἰῶσι (*GNO* III/4, 191). Again in the same work, Gregory is clear that God

will heal all humans from sin, which is the illness and death of the soul; against this, God has provided a double medication (φάρμακον): virtue in this life, or else, if one remains ἀθεράπευτος in this life, a therapy (θεραπεία) in the next, which can be more or less drastic depending on the seriousness of a soul's illness, and which will be administered at the judgement, the κρίσις (GNO III/4, 31–34). All the illnesses and “cancers” of the soul “on the occasion of the judgement will be cut away and cauterised by that ineffable Wisdom and Power of the One who, as the Gospel says, heals those who are unwell/evil [τοὺς καχοὺς ἰατρῶντος]” (ibid. 33,6–9). The final Judgement is a healing action of God. This is “the aim of the wisdom of the One who administers all with his providence,” namely “to call back the sick to the original grace by means of repentance/conversion” (ibid. 34,2–3; 16–17). Likewise in *De an.* 89 Gregory states that salvation will come “thanks either to solicitude in this life or to purification afterwards.” For “some have already been purified from evil during the present life, while others are healed by fire in the future one, for the necessary time.” For spiritual progress does not stop at the end of one's earthly life. As Origen claimed in his argument concerning Pharaoh in Book 3 of *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, “the therapy for Pharaoh does not end” with his physical death in the Red Sea. Divine Providence will assist him until his ultimate conversion and salvation.

God's very introduction of physical death is seen by Gregory—as by Methodius, Irenaeus, and Origen—as a benefit, a trick of God to save all humanity. If Methodius maintained that physical death, by cutting short sins, spares humans “an eternity of condemnation,” Gregory repeatedly asserts that physical death was excogitated by God to save humans. Gregory has Wis 2:24 in mind: “Death entered the world because of the devil's envy.” As I have already shown, Gregory ascribes most of the responsibility for the fall to the devil's deception, which tends to merge with the deception of the senses. The “skin tunics” that came after the fall (Gen 3:21) represent the present condition of mortality and liability to passions, which assimilates humans to irrational animals. In *Or. cat.* 8 Gregory explains that after the fall God took off from the human being the garments of its original happiness, i.e. immortality, confidence (*parrhēsia*), and *apatheia*, and put death on it. Since the skin, separated from the animal, is dead, God, in covering humans with skin tunics, covers them with death, which is proper to irrational animals. But this garment of mortality (τὴν πρὸς τὸ νεκροῦσθαι δύναμιν, GNO III/4, 30,10–11) remained alien and external (ἔξωθεν, ibid. 14) to the human being, so “not to persist eternally” (οὐχ ὥς εἰς αἰὲν παραμένειν, ibid. 13). For “the mortality [νεκρότης] of the nature of irrational animals was put around the nature created for immortality for a providential purpose

[οἰκονομικῶς],” that of saving it (ibid. 16–18). God, when clothing humans in mortality, was looking to nothing else but “how we could live in the best condition possible” (GNO III/4, 29,12–13). Since we humans had “fallen from an impassible beatitude to evilness, and thus were transformed, for this reason the human being is dissolved again into earth, like a clay vase, so that, after being purified from the dirtiness that has been received by it, it could be *fashioned anew* into its original form through the resurrection [εἰς τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς σχῆμα ἀναπλασθεῖν], provided that it has kept in itself the characteristic of being in the image of God in the present life” (GNO III/4, 29,17–22). If not, purification will be needed in the next, as Gregory explains afterwards. The mechanism of death is providential: “after the destruction of the matter that had received evil, God through the resurrection will fashion again [ἀναπλάσας] our ‘vase,’ recreating it from its elements [ἀναστοιχειώσει] into its original beauty [τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς κάλλος]” (ibid. 31,19–21). In *De mort.* GNO IX 55–62, too, Gregory explains that God inflicted death upon humans as a good: “The body will be transformed when it is created again at resurrection into something more divine: death will have purified it from all that is useless and superfluous to the enjoyment of the future life. After purification in fire, it will take off all that is earthly and useless, what the experts call scoriae [...] now the nature of our body has many qualities that are scoriae, which have some usefulness for the present life, but will be completely useless and alien to the blessedness we hope for.”<sup>337</sup> Death is good, destroying all that which is superfluous to the next, blessed life: “What happens to iron in fire, when the fusion destroys what is useless, will also happen when all that is superfluous will be destroyed through dissolution in death [τῆς ἐν τῇ νεκρότητι λύσεως], and our body will be *set right* [κατορθοῦται] through death.” Physical death is providential because it will free us from passions and direct our desires to what is worthy of them.<sup>338</sup> Death is good because it demolishes our present body, our “earthly house,” to give us our new, immortal, and glorious house.<sup>339</sup> All the properties of our body will be

<sup>337</sup> The idea of the deposition of the skin tunics at resurrection was already set forth by Origen. Even the selfsame verb is used by Origen and by Gregory for this action of “taking off”: ἀποτίθημι. Likewise, also in *De an.* 148–149 Gregory foresees the deposition of the skin tunics, these dead tunics taken from animals and symbolising death.

<sup>338</sup> “Scoriae will disappear, those things to which the impulses of our desires are now directed: pleasures, richness, love for glory, power, anger, haughtiness, and the like. Thus, our impulse, once liberated and purified from all this, will turn in its activity only to what is worth desiring and loving: it will not altogether extinguish our natural impulses toward those objects, but will transform them in view of the immaterial participation in the true goods.”

<sup>339</sup> “It is the purified body that we should love, not the scoriae that have been taken off. For

transformed into something “more divine,” but above all the human being as a whole will be liberated from evil and restored. Death is again defined as a good (ἀγαθόν) in *In Pulch.* 472, because it represents “the beginning and the path of change toward the better.”

That the doctrine of apokatastasis in Gregory implies universal salvation clearly emerges from his texts and is recognised by many scholars, for example Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco,<sup>340</sup> Anthony Meredith,<sup>341</sup> Morwenna Ludlow,<sup>342</sup> J. Gaith,<sup>343</sup> Constantine Tsirpanlis,<sup>344</sup> Brian Daley,<sup>345</sup> Nonna Verna Harrison,<sup>346</sup> Jean Terrieux,<sup>347</sup> Henriette Meissner,<sup>348</sup> Steven R. Harmon,<sup>349</sup> Henryk Pietras,<sup>350</sup> Giorgio Maturi,<sup>351</sup> John McGuckin,<sup>352</sup> Hans Boersma,<sup>353</sup> and many others. Some scholars have recently attempted to deny it; this is why it is nec-

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what divine Scripture says is true: after the destruction of our earthly house, then we shall find the building made by God for us: a house not made by human hands, in the next world, in heaven, worthy of being itself the home of God in Spirit.”

<sup>340</sup> Esp. s.vv. “Eschatology,” “Soteriology,” “Otherworldly Purification,” in *Brill Dictionary*, 274–288; 694–699; 559–561.

<sup>341</sup> S.v. “Influence of Gregory of Nyssa,” *ibid.* 427–428.

<sup>342</sup> In *Universal Salvation* (Oxford, 2000) and *Gregory of Nyssa Ancient and Postmodern* (Oxford: University Press, 2007), of which see my review in *Review of Biblical Literature* 04/2008 [<http://www.bookreviews.org/BookDetail.asp?TitleId=6173>].

<sup>343</sup> *La conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris, 1953), 187–195.

<sup>344</sup> “The Concept of Universal Salvation in Saint Gregory of Nyssa,” in *Greek Patristic Theology I* (New York, 1979), 41–56, *praes.* 42–43; *Idem* in *Studia Patristica*, XVII, 3, 1982, 1131–1144, *praes.* 1139–1144.

<sup>345</sup> *The Hope of the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1991), 85–88.

<sup>346</sup> *Grace and Freedom according to St. Gregory of Nyssa* (Lewiston, N.Y., 1992).

<sup>347</sup> *Grégoire de Nysse, Sur l'âme et la résurrection*, présent. et trad. du grec par J. Terrieux (Paris, 1995).

<sup>348</sup> *Rhetorik und Theologie*, 82; 356–361.

<sup>349</sup> “The Work of Jesus Christ and the Universal Apokatastasis in the Theology of St. Gregory of Nyssa,” in *Jesus Christ in the Theology of St. Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. E. Moutsoulas (Athens, 2005), 225–243; *Id.*, “The Subjection of All Things in Christ,” in *All Shall Be Well. Universal Salvation and Christian Theology from Origen to Moltmann*, ed. G. MacDonald [= R. Parry] (Cambridge, 2011), 47–64. See also *Id.*, *Every Knee Should Bow* (Lanham, 2003).

<sup>350</sup> *L'escatologia nei Padri della Chiesa. Dagli scritti giudaici fino al IV secolo* (Rome, 2006). On p. 104, Pietras describes Gregory of Nyssa's idea of apokatastasis as the final victory of God: “la vittoria di Dio sarà totale.”

<sup>351</sup> “Ἀποκατάστασις e ἀνάστασις in Gregorio di Nissa,” *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 66 (2000) 227–240.

<sup>352</sup> J.A. McGuckin, “Eschatological Horizons in the Cappadocian Fathers,” in *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity*, ed. R.J. Daly (Grand Rapids, MI, 2009). D. Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite. The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, 2003), 318–412 rethinks Gregory's eschatology, although he does not explicitly adhere to his universalism. Salvation is realised by means of the recapitulation and restoration of the divine image in Christ, in whom the economy of violence is overcome by the infinity of God's peace.

<sup>353</sup> In the above-mentioned *Embodiment and Virtue*.

essary to examine briefly their positions. Giulio Maspero<sup>354</sup> has rightly called attention to the necessity of a diachronic study of the works of Gregory, but with regard to apokatastasis this does not reveal a progressive detachment from Origen's view;<sup>355</sup> on the contrary, it reveals the uninterrupted presence of the apokatastasis doctrine—understood as implying universal salvation—from the earliest to the latest phases of Gregory's production. It is far from being attested only<sup>356</sup> in *De vit. Mos.* 2,82 and *Or. cat.* GNO III/4, 91, but, as I have already shown, it is possible to trace it from *De anima* to *In illud*, *Oratio catechetica*, *De infantibus* and *De mortuis*, *De vita Mosis*, and so on up to the *Homiliae in Canticum*, probably Gregory's last work in its definitive redaction. Indeed, many passages, and throughout the chronological range of his production, attest to Gregory's concept of apokatastasis as universal salvation. Likewise, the salvation of the devil is maintained not only in *De anima*,<sup>357</sup> but at least also in *Or. cat.* 26, as I have pointed out; Gregory has even less doubts than Origen in asserting it.

According to Maspero, who follows Daniélou, in Gregory apokatastasis is “only a synonym of resurrection” and does not entail a concept of universal salvation.<sup>358</sup> However, the resurrection as conceived by Gregory and other Origenian Fathers is not simply the reconstitution of the body, possibly for the eternal damnation of the whole human being in hell, but it is the restoration of humanity to its original state, as Gregory repeatedly claims in *De anima*, *In Eccl.* GNO V 296,16–18, and elsewhere; this restoration involves, not only the body, but also the soul and its faculties, including the intellect, and entails a full rejection of sin, the return to the state in which the human being had not yet received evil.

Also, Maspero is right to emphasise the importance of human choices and personal freedom, which was indeed extremely important for Gregory, and for Origen as well, who maintained it against “Gnosticism,” but neither of them regarded it as an impediment to apokatastasis (the full achievement of the work of divine Providence), precisely because they both considered

<sup>354</sup> *La Trinità e l'uomo. L'Ad Ablabium di Gregorio di Nissa* (Rome, 2004), 176 ff.; cf. Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, first Integrative Essay and nn. 76–80; Maspero, *Trinity and Man. Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabium* (Leiden, 2007), 76–94.

<sup>355</sup> This is the case in several other respects as well, but the demonstration necessarily requires a monograph apart. According to Daniélou, whom Maspero follows, Gregory detached himself from “Origenism,” but “Origenism” should be distinguished from Origen's true thought.

<sup>356</sup> As is claimed in *La Trinità*, 183–184 = *Trinity and Man*, 81–82.

<sup>357</sup> As is stated in *Trinity and Man*, 91.

<sup>358</sup> *Trinity and Man*, 91–92.

the eventual submission of all rational creatures to Christ as voluntary and as a result of a process of illumination, purification, healing, and διόρθωσις, carried out essentially by Christ. Personal choices will certainly have their consequences, in terms of reward or punishment; Gregory only excludes the *eternity* of otherworldly punishment, not its existence. Gregory, like Origen, was far from upholding a common destiny for all human beings after death on the sheer basis of their common belonging to human nature. This would make free will vain, whereas Gregory, like Origen, insists on each one's responsibility for his own choices, and on the freedom that marks moral acts. Thus, the final adhesion of all to the Good will have to be voluntary, and not forced, as I have already pointed out. What Gregory is convinced of, like Origen, is that all, after instruction and purification, which can also be very long and painful, will surely adhere to the Good and will submit to Christ and thus to God. In *De perf.* GNO VIII/1 204,9–205,14 Gregory observes that after the resurrection one can be condemned, because only those who are worthy of connaturality with God will be brought by Christ to God, and this is consistent with Gregory's view of responsibility for each one's choices. What Gregory does *not* say, however, either here or anywhere else, is that this condemnation will be eternal. Simply, he states that sinners must first be purified from what is unworthy of God; only then will they be able to access God. Consistently with this perspective, Gregory sometimes insists on how terrible and long the otherworldly punishments may be, clearly with the pastoral aim of diverting his flock from sin, for instance in Homily 5 on the Beatitudes; likewise Macrina in *De anima* emphasises the same, with the same purpose. But nowhere and in no way is it stated that these punishments will last eternally; on the contrary, what Gregory expressly claims is that these will come to an end and, after the necessary purification, "no being will remain outside the number of the saved" (*In Illud* 21 Downing).

In *De ben.* GNO IX 100,5 Gregory uses διαιωνίζουσα in reference to otherworldly punishment, to be sure, but this does not in the least indicate its eternity. As I have already demonstrated, it means "lasting for the whole aeon to come," or "throughout the aeons to come," until apokatastasis itself, which marks the end of all aeons. This is clear from *De an.* 101,17, where this term is used in reference to otherworldly punishment, but where precisely the doctrine of universal apokatastasis is being supported.<sup>359</sup> Likewise, ἀληκτον ὀδυρμόν in *Ad eos qui cast.* GNO X/2 328,16 alludes to 3 Mac 4:2 and indicates an uninterrupted lamentation; it does not imply eternity in the

<sup>359</sup> See my "Αἰώνιος and αἰών in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa."

LXX passage (ἄληκτον πένθος). It is uninterrupted while it lasts, but it does not mean that it will last eternally. I have also demonstrated that Gregory's use of ἀπόλλυμι in *De beat.* GNO VII/2 135–136 does not imply an eternal and definitive perdition; it was already used by Origen and, earlier, in Luke 15 in reference to the sheep and the drachma that were lost (ἀπόλλυμι), but then were recovered; likewise the prodigal son had perished (ἀπόλλυμι), but he returned to life when he decided to return home and ask for his father's forgiveness. In Matt 10:6 Jesus sends his disciples to recover the lost (ἀπόλλυμι) sheep of the house of Israel; these were lost, but are found again and rescued. In Luke 19:10 the Son of the Human Being is said to look for, and save, those beings that are lost or have perished (ἀπόλλυμι); they perished, but they are saved. When Gregory describes the sinner as ἀπολλύμενος, this ἀπώλεια is not understood by him as definitive. Similarly, the “worm that does not die” and the “unquenchable fire” are Gospel images that do not entail eternal punishment, but a differentiation from the fire and worms of this world, which can be quenched and die. These images were used by Origen as well and by other supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis, because they did not consider them to be in contradiction with that doctrine.

Maspero also adduces *In inscr. Ps.* GNO V 174,22–175,25, which I have already analysed, about those who will be “thrown out of the city” and punished with “hunger for goods.” This is a proof that Gregory believed in other-worldly punishment, to be sure, but: 1) Gregory *nowhere* declares that such a punishment will be *eternal*; 2) this passage is bipartite. In the first part, commenting on Ps 59:13–14, Gregory speaks of the ultimate *telos*, when all evil will be destroyed, and all “will know that God is the Lord.” The second part begins after a strong break and comments, no longer on vv. 13–14, but on v. 15, which is a repetition of a much earlier verse, v. 7: “then it takes up *again* the same discourse [εἶτα πάλιν τὸν αὐτὸν ἐπαναλαμβάνει λόγον] concerning those who return in the evening and are hungry.” Thus, the discourse goes back from the ultimate *telos* (apokatastasis) to intermediate eschatology (punishment in the next world *before* the end of aeons). This punishment will take place “after the present life” (μετὰ ταῦτα), but not in the *telos*. I have already shown how Gregory in this very passage in fact proclaims the purification of all sinners from evil, which will disappear. The claim that according to Gregory those who remained fixed in evil in the present life will enter eternity in a static way contrasts with God's attractive action on all souls, which Gregory emphasises for instance in *De anima* and continually up to his Homilies on the Song of Songs. God's attractive action can have as a side effect even very intense suffering for souls that are deeply immersed in evil (and on a



different construal these sufferings can be regarded as those souls' "punishment"), but God never fails to finally extract these souls from evil.

Among all the passages in which Gregory supports universal apokatastasis, which I have already cited, that from which it emerges most unequivocally that apokatastasis in his view entails universal salvation is probably *In Illud* 21 Downing, which I have quoted more than once.<sup>360</sup> Similarly, *ibid.* 14 Downing, Gregory clearly states that "No creature of God will fall out of the Kingdom of God," μηδενὸς τῶν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονότων τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ ἀποπίπτοντος. He refers to the eventual state, after the purification of all those who will need it, and is adamant that "after all evilness that had got mixed with the beings, like a sort of spurious matter, has been destroyed through the fusion of the purifying fire, every being that had its origin from God [πάν ὁ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔσχε τὴν γένεσιν] will return such as it was from the beginning, when it had not yet received sin/evil," ὅτε οὐπω τὴν κακίαν ἐδέξατο. In *In illud* Gregory even bases his anti-subordinationistic argument in defence of the equal dignity between the Son and the Father on his doctrine of apokatastasis. Here he draws many points from Origen, as I have thoroughly demonstrated.<sup>361</sup> In *De anima*, Gregory grounds his argument for apokatastasis in his argument for the resurrection. In these works, his defence of apokatastasis is connected with an anti-"Arian" and anti-"Gnostic" polemic ("Arianism" supported the subordinationism of the Son and "Gnosticism" denied the resurrection of the body), just as Origen supported it in an anti-"Gnostic" and anti-Marcionite context.<sup>362</sup> Both Origen and Gregory elaborated and supported the theory of apokatastasis in the framework of their polemics against the "heretics" of their day.

<sup>360</sup> "Since all that comes to be in it [sc. in Christ's body] is saved, and it is as salvation that submission must be understood, as the Psalm suggests to think, as a consequence in this passage of the Apostle [1 Cor 15:28] we learn that it is necessary to maintain that *no being will remain outside of those who are saved* [μηδὲν ἔξω τῶν σωζομένων]."

<sup>361</sup> "*In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius ....*" and with further arguments "The Trinitarian Theology." I have demonstrated that Gregory directly grounded his anti-subordinationism in Origen (on whose positions see my "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism"). M. Cassin, *L'écriture de la controverse chez Grégoire de Nysse. Polémique littéraire et exégèse dans le Contre Eunome* (Paris, 2012), which for the rest has many elements of merit, discusses the debate on the divinity of the Son in the IV cent. neglecting Origen's fundamental role or his influence on Gregory on this score. Now we should add also the specific influence on the formation of the technical Trinitarian meaning of ὑπόστασις (see my "Origen ... and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis"). Among anterior authors, Cassin takes only Basil and Eunomius into account; not only Origen's role, but also the role of philosophy outside Origen is not adequately taken into consideration.

<sup>362</sup> As I argued in "La coerenza della soteriologia origeniana," in *Pagani e cristiani alla ricerca della salvezza* (Rome, 2006), 661–688.

Salvatore Taranto, in a book that in other respects contains some elements of interest, devotes a section to Gregory's eschatology, also claiming, on no grounds, that Gregory detached himself from Origen and rejected the doctrine of apokatastasis understood as universal salvation.<sup>363</sup> He states that Gregory knew the doctrine of apokatastasis "nella 'versione' origeniana, non ritenuta probabilmente accettabile" (618). What emerges from Gregory's texts, however, is that he follows Origen in every respect, even up to the tiniest exegetical and doctrinal details, in his eschatology.<sup>364</sup> From a comparison, in fact, it results that it is Gregory the more radical of the two in embracing the apokatastasis doctrine in the form of universal salvation, since he has no problem in proclaiming the conversion and eventual salvation even of the devil (*Or. cat.* 26 et al.), which notoriously worried Origen much more. Taranto contends that Gregory came to realise that "la libertà della creatura richiede la possibilità di un futuro incerto, possibilità che non contrasta con la necessità della totale sparizione del non-essere," that is, of evil (620). This "uncertain future," however, for Gregory just as for Origen, concerns the destiny of each one between his or her death and the final apokatastasis (and not his or her eternal destiny proper); this can be a destiny of beatitude or of purification and suffering, more or less enduring and intense depending on one's deserts. But in the end evil will vanish precisely because there will be no evil left in anyone, when all have been purified from it and have rejected

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<sup>363</sup> *Gregorio di Nissa: un contributo alla storia dell'interpretazione* (Brescia, 2009), 615–655. For instance, he states that "la creatura, avendo compreso di essersi opposta all'amore del suo Creatore, soffrirà eternamente per quel totale distacco che ella ha eternamente voluto e al quale le era stata data la possibilità di porre rimedio"; that Gregory "afferma l'esistenza di uno stato eterno di dannazione" and that "con il tempo Gregorio si allontanerà sempre di più dalle posizioni tenute dall'Alessandrino sul tema escatologico" (615–616). But he can obviously produce no text of Gregory to support these claims, not even in reference to the devil. The few texts that he does adduce are far from proving this, especially as none states the *eternity* of the sinner's sufferings, as I shall show. A typical example of his procedure is his claim that Gregory "afferma l'esistenza di un destino di sofferenza eterna per chi non si lasci trasformare dalla grazia e non si apra alla virtù. Tale posizione è affermata soprattutto in *AnRes*," i.e. *De anima et resurrectione* (617). However, no passage from *De anima* (or from any other work of Gregory's) demonstrates this contention.

<sup>364</sup> See my "The Trinitarian Theology." Taranto states that in Gregory "la convinzione che lo stato finale sia un ritorno a quello protologico permarrà sempre, nonostante con l'approfondimento della riflessione il Nisseno vedrà il primo come un superamento del secondo" (618). But this is not an instance of Gregory's distancing himself from Origen, since Origen also thought that the *telos* will be, not identical to, but better than the *arkhē*, in that it will entail the voluntary adhesion of all rational creatures to the Good in their moral and spiritual development. This is also why Origen insisted even more than Gregory on the difference between εἰκὼν (as a protological datum) and ὁμοίωσις (to be reached through voluntary engagement).

it once and for all. This is why Gregory can foresee that in the end, when “the enemy will have definitely disappeared and passed to non-being,” all animated creatures will praise God, and this praise will not come from any sinner, not because sinners will refuse to praise God, but because “there will be *no sinner* when there will be no sin left.” It is this state of total freedom from sin and joyous praise of God—and not the intermediate state of painful purification from evil—that will last “eternally” (*In Ps.* 1,9). It is certainly the case that in *De beat.* 1209 Gregory remarks that beatitude is to be inherited only by those who will be worthy of it,<sup>365</sup> but this does not mean that if one is still unworthy of it at the end of the present life one will never become worthy of it by means of otherworldly purification and instruction. In *In sex. Ps.* 188–191 McDonough, Gregory certainly speaks of the final judgement, but he does not claim that the punishment it may decree will be eternal; it is not the case that he postulates an “immutabilità della condizione escatologica” and thinks that “non ci sarà più tempo per il pentimento, il quale deve necessariamente esercitarsi in questa vita” (623). It is true that for Gregory “il giudizio verrà esercitato proprio sul bene e sul male commessi” in this life, and that he often speaks of a punishment decreed at the judgement,<sup>366</sup> but this holds true also in the cases of Origen, Evagrius, and the other supporters of the apokatastasis doctrine. What Gregory does *not* say, anywhere, is that any condemnation decided by God at the judgement will be eternal.

Taranto also argues that Gregory does not deem the doctrine of apokatastasis revealed by Scripture, but only grounded in reason. He supports this argument by means of *De mort.* 20–21, p. 76 Lozza, where Gregory, after speaking of the final apokatastasis as the state in which one and the same light and grace will shine forth in all humans after the eviction of the “last

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<sup>365</sup> As Taranto observes on 618. While the rest of his treatment in his book is generally sound, Taranto’s discussion of Gregory’s eschatology is undermined by the lack of texts of Gregory that may underpin his thesis, by an incorrect rendering of crucial Greek terms (see below), and by no attention to Gregory’s ethical intellectualism, which has Gregory think that the clear knowledge of the Good on the part of a purified and healed mind will not fail to elicit a spontaneous adhesion to the Good-God.

<sup>366</sup> Taranto quotes several of these passages, e.g. Homily 15 on the Song of Songs, where Gregory mentions the “crying and gnashing of teeth” of Matt 8:12; *In S. Pascha* 680, where Gregory cites the punishment by fire, darkness and worm (all Biblical images) and the distinction between those who will have “a resurrection of life” and those who will have “a resurrection of judgement” (John 5:28–29); *Hom. in Eccl.* 4, where Gregory distinguishes two outcomes of the judgement: the Kingdom of Heavens and Gehenna; *In S. Pascha* 653, where the judgement and the otherworldly punishment of those who have followed Satan are evoked. But in none of these passages is the *eternity* of the otherworldly punishment ever stated.

enemy," remarks that ὁ λόγος offers an important teaching on the destiny of the dead. But λόγος here does not mean "rational argument," as Taranto maintains, but, as often in Gregory, precisely "Scripture": this is evident because Gregory has just appealed to Paul (1 Cor 15:26; 1 Thess 4:13) and the Gospel (John 17). Indeed, that the apokatastasis doctrine in his view is based on the Bible, and not only on reasoning, is even clearer from his *In Illud*, where he bases it on 1 Cor 15:28 as well as on Jesus's prayer for unity in John 17 and other Biblical passages. Gregory deems apokatastasis revealed by the divine Scripture, and not simply a human conjecture.

Taranto cites the above-mentioned *De an.* 101,17 as evidence of the doctrine of an eternal punishment in the next world (632). However, the term used here in reference to otherworldly punishment is αἰώνιον, which does not mean "eternal," and in the very context it is precisely the doctrine of universal apokatastasis that is being supported. Macrina has just explained that evil must entirely disappear in the end; therefore, those who have accumulated more evil will have to burn longer in the purifying fire; the duration will be proportional to one's sins (no mention of an infinite duration; only a discourse of measure and proportionality, which always implies a limit). Gregory then asks: "But what would be the benefit of this good hope for one who considers what a great evil is to suffer pains even just for one year, and if that unbearable pain should last for a long interval [εἰς αἰώνιον τι διάστημα], which consolation remains from the hope for a remote future to one whose punishment extends to the measure of a whole aeon [πρὸς ὅλον αἰῶνα συνδιαμετρῆται]?" Macrina replies: "This is why it is necessary, either to preserve one's soul absolutely pure from any mixture and communion with the contaminations that come from evilness, or, if this is absolutely impossible because our nature is exposed to passions, to see that the failures of virtue may consist in falls as limited [μετρίοις] as possible, and easy to remedy [εὐθεραπεύτοις]." Taranto mistranslates αἰώνιον as "eternal" instead of "long" (although an "eternal interval" or διάστημα is a *contradictio in adiecto*),<sup>367</sup> αἰών as "eternity" instead of "aeon" (even if eternity is incompatible with the

<sup>367</sup> A similar mistranslation occurs on p. 643 in reference to *Or. cat.* 40,7–8, where Gregory is speaking of the Biblical "fire that cannot be quenched" and "worm that does not die," stressing that they are *qualitatively* different from those of this world, which we experience every day. He is not remarking that the Bible describes them as "eternal," and thus quantitatively different from ours, but that they are different from the fire and the worms that we experience, which can be easily extinguished or crushed. When in *Hom. in Eccl.* 8 he threatens the rich who sins with the unquenchable fire and the judgement, nothing authorises readers to state that his words affirm the "possibilità dell'eternità delle pene" (635).

notion of measure conveyed by συνδιαμετρεῖται),<sup>368</sup> and εὐθεράπευτοι as “curable” instead of “easy to heal,” thus giving the impression that there are also sins that are “incurable” even for God. But Gregory followed Origen in believing that nothing is incurable for the Creator, and indeed Macrina goes on to argue, on the basis of the Gospel parable of the debtors, that the sins accumulated by each one are like debts that will be extinguished by means of torments, again insisting that the duration of these torments will be proportional to the entity of the sins. This excludes infinite torments, and actually Macrina concludes in 104A that when all have been liberated from their sins in that way, all will come to be in God, and God will be “all in all.”

### *The Third Cappadocian: Gregory of Nazianzus*

Gregory Nazianzen (329/30–390 ca.),<sup>369</sup> Basil’s friend, who very probably collaborated with him in the preparation of the *Philocalia* by selecting and collecting excerpts from Origen’s works, although without devoting a formal and complete theorisation to apokatastasis, was almost surely inclined to this view.

The evaluation of his linguistic use in respect to the concepts of “eternity” and “eternal” is crucial to the assessment of this question.<sup>370</sup> When he speaks in his own voice, to denote “eternal” proper Gregory generally prefers the use of αἰδιος, the philosophical term, to that of αἰώνιος, the Biblical term, which he employs almost exclusively in citations of, or allusions to, Scripture, chiefly in reference to God or to the future life. He uses the biblical expression ζωὴ αἰώνιος for life in the future world and contrasts it with “the

<sup>368</sup> Likewise, on pp. 646–647 the expression εἰς ἄπειρον παρατείνεται ἡ διὰ τῆς καθάρσεως κόλασις in *De inf.* 184A is mistranslated “la pena per l’espiazione è infinita” instead of “the punishment aimed at purification tends to the unlimited,” “to an indefinite duration.” Firstly, if it aims at purification, it cannot be infinite; secondly, Gregory is drawing a comparison with the fate of those who have not even begun to live on earth: both their fate and that of those who have no sins upon them is declared to be better than that of those who do have sin upon them, which must be purified away in suffering even for a long time. In the very same work, indeed, *De inf.* 168, Gregory foresees only two possible eschatological outcomes: either immediate beatitude or purification by fire. *Tertium non datur.*

<sup>369</sup> For a valuable introduction I limit myself to referring to B. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (London, 2006), also with an evaluation of the important role that his works played in the life of the Church and in the reflection on the task of the Christian intellectual. See also F. Trisoglio, *San Gregorio di Nazianzo: un contemporaneo vissuto sedici secoli fa*, eds. R.L. Guidi–D. Petti (Cantalupa, 2008).

<sup>370</sup> See a systematic analysis in Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 185–189.

shadow of death" in *De paup. am.* PG 35,884,40. Of course Gregory employs ζωὴ αἰώνιος also when he cites the Gospels, for example when he alludes to the episode of the Samaritan woman in *De S. Bapt.* PG 36,397,37: Jesus is "a source of living water which spurts toward life in the world to come," and in many other passages. He expresses eschatological optimism in *Epist.* 178,12: "Go forward, fly with your mind, take possession of life in the world to come, never fail to hope." The same meaning of "life in the world to come" is conveyed by βίος αἰώνιος at *Epist.* 61,3, where Gregory contrasts with "the present life, bound to this world and transient [ἐν τῷ προσκαίρῳ τούτῳ βίῳ καὶ ῥέοντι], that of the future world, which endures [ἐν τῷ αἰωνίῳ καὶ μένοντι]." Gregory uses αἰώνιος in other phrases as well, always in reference to the future life. A particularly interesting passage is in his farewell oration PG 36, 465,40–45, which finds close parallels in both Origen and Evagrius (the latter maintained that the contemplation of God's mercy comes after that of God's justice<sup>371</sup>). God says:

I have afflicted you with just little anger, and I shall glorify you with mercy for the world to come [ἐλέω αἰωνίῳ]: *the measure of my love for humankind is greater, beyond the measure of my instruction of them [...]; the latter is for their purification, the former for my glory.*

In *Carm. mor.* col. 711,11–13, Gregory uses biblical language to indicate the future life of the blessed: "A chorus which never ceases of those who hymn Christ as great, a festival of the first-born inscribed in heaven and in the books of the next world," βίβλοις τε ταῖς αἰωνίοις. Ibid. 924,14 Gregory exhorts: "be always concerned with the glory of the next world [αἰωνίου], because the present glory deceives, for it lasts but a day." Here a double contrast is introduced between present and future and between brief and long duration. In *De paup. am.* PG 35,864,17 Gregory, echoing the NT, speaks of the places prepared in paradise near God for the blessed: μοναὶ αἰώνιοι καὶ μακάριοι [...] παρὰ Θεῷ. A similar biblical reminiscence is found ibid. 35,909,40: τὰς αἰωνίους σκενὰς, which are the homes of the blessed in paradise.

In conformity with biblical usage, where αἰώνιος acquires the meaning "eternal" when it is used in reference to God, Gregory also applies it to God in this meaning (*De nov. Dom.* PG 36,608,38); he also cites Micah who speaks of "αἰώνιοι mountains" in the sense of "very ancient," but of course by no means eternal (*Apol. ad Patr.* PG 35,824,11 and *In s. bapt.* PG 36,409,35). Gregory Nazianzen, however, as I have mentioned, prefers by far ἄϊδιος when

<sup>371</sup> See below in this same chapter, section on Evagrius.

speaking in his own voice. In *Or. fun. in Caes.* 1,6, Gregory contrasts the ephemeral things of the flesh with spiritual realities, which are absolutely eternal: τὰ πνευματικὰ καὶ αἰδία. In his Letter 88,4, he says to his addressee that the good he will do will stay with him and be helpful to him absolutely eternally (αἰδίων), after the present life and into the next. Clearly, every good that is done by anyone is absolutely eternal because it participates in the absolute Good, that is, God, who is eternal par excellence. Indeed, αἰδιος, “eternal” proper, is a characterisation that belongs first of all to God, although humans can come to participate in it; so, God the Father is eternal light, αἰδίων φῶς (*De episc.* PG 35,1073,14; cf. PG 36,609,32: “For those realities that are eternal [τοῖς αἰδίοις], he himself is the Light”). This is why Nazianzen, like Origen before him against “subordinationists” who were precursors of Arianism,<sup>372</sup> insisted so much on the absolute eternity of the Son, by nature and not by participation, in that this implies his divinity. In *Or.* 29,3, Nazianzen, while arguing for the eternity of the Son although he is generated by the Father, observes that what has no beginning is also absolutely eternal (τὸ ἀναρχὸν καὶ αἰδίων). However, the reverse is not always the case: what is eternal not always is without beginning or principle (τὸ αἰδίων οὐ πάντως ἀναρχὸν). Indeed, the Son is eternal, but has as his principle (ἀρχή) the Father, the same principle from which Origen began his *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*. The Father generated the Son, to be sure, but outside of time (χρόνος), in eternity, the biblical αἰών.<sup>373</sup> The generation of the Son is absolutely eternal (αἰδίων, *ibid.* 13,4). Gregory—who was aware of the meaning “eternity” that αἰών had in the Platonic tradition, but also of the meaning “aeon” that it had in Origen, who, like Gregory himself, was also acquainted with the biblical meaning—offers a definition of the biblical αἰών as the correspondent of χρόνος for absolutely eternal realities in *Theoph.* PG 36,320,17: αἰών “is neither time [χρόνος] nor a part of time, because it is not even measurable, but rather, what time [χρόνος] is for us, as measured by the movement of the sun, is just what αἰών is for absolutely eternal realities,” τοῖς αἰδίοις.<sup>374</sup>

In *Or. fun. Bas.* 72,4, Gregory is comparing the work of Christ with that of the Jewish priests, with an obvious reminiscence of Hebrews, but certainly also, I find, of Origen’s exegesis of it.<sup>375</sup> Thus, he claims that Christ “purifies

<sup>372</sup> See Ramelli, “The Trinitarian Theology,” in which it is demonstrated that this polemic of Origen’s was taken over by Gregory of Nyssa, who heavily relies on Origen’s points.

<sup>373</sup> Gregory, in more philosophical terms, defines it as the interval coextensive with eternal realities: τὸ παρεκτενόμενον τοῖς αἰδίοις διάστημα.

<sup>374</sup> The same definition occurs in *In S. Pascha* PG 36,628,33.

<sup>375</sup> On which see I. Ramelli, “Origen’s interpretation of Hebrews 10:13, the Eventual Elim-

the people not with ephemeral [προσκαίροις] sprinklings, but with eternal expiations [ἀϊδίους ἀγνίσματα],” i.e., effective eternally. It is interesting that Gregory Nazianzen, assuming a more philosophical vocabulary, transforms Paul's contrast between πρόσκαιρα and αἰώνια into the contrast between πρόσκαιρα and ἀΐδια, “ephemeral” and “absolutely eternal.” He insists on the same contrast also in *In S. Pascha* PG 36,656,13: we must respect the law “according to the Gospel, not the letter; perfectly, not imperfectly; eternally, and not temporally [ἀΐδίως, ἀλλὰ μὴ πρόσκαιρως].” Similarly, in *Carm. mor.* col. 93,12 he contrasts transient things (τὰ ῥέοντα) with absolutely eternal things (ἀΐδια).

An interesting passage to discuss is found in *Carm. mor.* col. 663,2, in which Gregory describes the torments of conscience, out of fear at the thought of the Gospel description of future punishment: “a source of fire that is not extinguished” and “a worm that devours eternally [ἀΐδίως],” whereas in the Gospel there is mention only of a worm that “does not die,” in that it is not like those of this world that die and can even very easily be killed by trampling upon them. Gregory's choice of using ἀΐδίως might appear as an explicit position against apokatastasis. But, first of all, Gregory was very likely constrained by the meter to write ἀΐδίως here, since neither ἀτελευτήτως nor αἰωνίως would fit. What is more, he represents all these events as the nightmares and phantoms of a sinner suffering from a guilty conscience, and he observes that these visions of threats are useful and are sent by God to sinners, accusing them, in order to provide them with a “medicine for salvation”:

ἄγραφος κατήγορος Θεός [...] τὸ γὰρ με κάμνειν, φάρμακον σωτηρίας.

God is my accuser without a written accusation [...] For *tormenting* me is a *medicine for salvation*.

Gregory is clearly using the common imagery of God as physician, used also by Basil his friend, as I have mentioned, and before him by Clement and Origen, who maintained that, if necessary, God may use extremely severe remedies, but with the sole aim of saving the sinner. Furthermore, Gregory implicitly appeals to the idea—dear to Clement, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa, and developed by Basil as well—of God as an educator, parent, or master, who threatens the child or disciple who still does good out of fear, and is not yet able to do so out of love.

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ination of Evil, and Apokatastasis,” *Augustinianum* 47 (2007) 85–93, and especially eadem, “The Universal and Eternal Validity.”



Therefore, the passage at stake cannot possibly be used as sure evidence that Gregory Nazianzen rejected the doctrine of apokatastasis. Neither can a couple of other passages be used in this way. In *Apologetica* (*Orat.* 2) PG 35,437, Gregory Nazianzen refers to “the blessed and immortal soul, which will be punished or praised ἀθάνατα, on account of either virtue or evil.” Here ἀθάνατα does not refer to the absolute eternity of the punishment (or even of the praise), but rather to the fact that punishment and praise will be in the other world. In this respect, ἀθάνατα is almost a synonym of αἰώνια. This is confirmed by a passage of Athanasius—who knew Origen’s works well—in which ἀθάνατα is used as a synonym of αἰώνια in an eschatological context (the frame being that of the survival of the soul after the death of the body) in reference to the soul, which is ἀθάνατος and, unlike the body, contemplates objects that are ἀθάνατα καὶ αἰώνια: the soul, “after the death of the body, will continue to live and will not cease living [...] this is also why the objects of its thoughts and reflections are ἀθάνατα καὶ αἰώνια: because it is itself immortal” (*Adv. pag.* 32–33). What is more, Evagrius, too, who undoubtedly was a supporter of the apokatastasis doctrine not less convinced than Origen was, in *Exh. ad mon.* PG 79,1237, uses ἀθάνατα in the same way as Nazianzen does, that is, to indicate that the punishment he is speaking of is that of the other world, and the fire of the other world cannot be quenched like that of this world:

Καταναλωθήσεται πᾶς ἁμαρτωλὸς ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰωνίου πυρὸς καὶ οὐ δύναται τελευτήσαι· ἀθάνατα γὰρ βασανισθήσεται.

Every sinner will be consumed by fire in the next world and will be unable to quench it: he will be tormented in immortal torments.

In both Nazianzen’s and Evagrius’s passages, ἀθάνατα means “of the other world,” just like the invisible things, the αἰώνια, intelligible things, as opposed to those of the present world. It is a question of quality and transcendency, of this and the other world, not of duration. Neither of them, and certainly not Evagrius, understood it as an indication of the eternity of punishment. As I shall recall more extensively in the section devoted to Evagrius, Nazianzen and Evagrius collaborated in the years before and during the Constantinople council (381). In *De se ipso* 566 (PG 37,1009,5–1010) Gregory thinks of the fall of the soul and the otherworldly destiny of humans: Τὴν μὲν ἐγὼ τρομέω καὶ δεῖδια νύκτα καὶ ἡμέρα, / Εἰσορόων ψυχὴν θεόθεν πίπτουσαν ἔραζε / [...] ἐς βίον ἄλλον ἐρύσσει, / Ἡ πυρὸς, ἢ Θεοῦ φαεσφόρου ἀντιάσσοντας. / Εἰ δὲ Θεοῦ, καὶ ἅπαντας ἐσύστερον; ἄλλοθι κείσθω, “I tremble and fear this day and night, looking at the soul that, from God, falls down to earth [...] This will draw people to another life, where they will meet either fire or God who brings light. Will all, too,

partake of God later on? Let this be established elsewhere." In the next life, all will face either the fire or God, but that all will be with God in the end is suggested.

It is most significant in respect to Nazianzen's mentality that still around 380 CE, in *C. Eun. or. prodial.* 27,10, he regarded eschatology as one of those fields that were not yet dogmatically established and therefore still open to rational research, that which Origen had applied to Christian thought in those areas not clarified by Scripture, especially in his *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, but also in his *Commentary on John* and in most of his works. This is the list of such open questions according to Nazianzen: "the world or the worlds, matter, the soul, better or worse rational natures, the resurrection, the judgement, the retribution, Christ's suffering." Now, it is clear that this list exactly coincides with the themes that were the object of Origen's own rational, zetetic research, apart from Trinitarian theology, which appeared established by the time of the Cappadocians—indeed, the Cappadocians themselves contributed a great deal to the dogmatic definition of Trinitarian theology, and this depending precisely on Origen.<sup>376</sup> Gregory's methodological passage is patently a defence of Origen's Christian philosophy. For this did not counter ecclesiastical dogmata in questions regarding which there was not yet any dogma.<sup>377</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, indeed, appreciated philosophy, presented it as a balance between contemplation and practice, as well as between apophaticism and bold theological language,<sup>378</sup> and affirmed the value of classical philosophers who recognised the importance of a life of virtue. Philosophy is able to turn the finite mind toward God and lead to union with God. Nazianzen is close to Origen in his zetetic attitude and praise for intellectual innovation (*καινοτομία*), which he includes in the third economic time, that of the Spirit, which is revealed through spiritual exegesis.<sup>379</sup> Philosophy, exegesis, and theology are inseparable for these Christian philosophers, and Nazianzen himself wanted to be considered a Christian

<sup>376</sup> See Ramelli, "The Trinitarian Theology," and "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism." Gregory Nazianzen's very concern with presenting the generation of the Son as produced "without passion, atemporally, and incorporeally" (*ἀπαθῶς, ἀχρόνως, ἀσωμάτως*, *Or.* 29), and as passionless just because it is incorporeal, exactly reproduces Origen's own concerns, which were reflected at Nicaea (for this see my "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism").

<sup>377</sup> See Prinzivalli, *Magister*, 87.

<sup>378</sup> On which see B. Fulford, "Divine Names and the Embodied Intellect: Imagination and Sanctification in Gregory of Nazianzus' Account of Theological Language," *Studia Patristica* 50 (2011) 217–231.

<sup>379</sup> See F. Gautier, "Grégoire l'Innovateur? Tradition et innovation théologiques chez Grégoire de Nazianze," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 53 (2007) 235–266.

philosopher,<sup>380</sup> in addition to valuing classical *paideia* and wanting to absorb it in Christian culture<sup>381</sup>—another respect in which his closeness to Origen's attitude is manifest.

It seems to me important to notice that the fields of rational investigation listed by Nazianzen in the passage at stake constitute, all of them, themes related to the theory of apokatastasis. As a consequence, Gregory's defence of Origen's speculative praxis would seem to focus on this doctrine of his. It is no accident that this passage of Gregory Nazianzen was a source used by Origenist monks.<sup>382</sup> Indeed, the "condemnation of Origen" (but in fact of an extreme Origenism) arrived when Christianity experienced a progressive institutionalisation and dogmatisation, and the attitude to research was lost.<sup>383</sup>

I have already mentioned that Gregory Nazianzen, together with Basil, very probably collected long excerpts from Origen's works in their *Philocalia*. It is remarkable that in this collection, among the passages approved by Nazianzen and Basil, there are even references to the preexistence of the *logika* and their apokatastasis. Gregory of Nazianzus, to be sure, just like Gregory Nyssen, criticised the preexistence of bare soul, especially in *Orr.* 2,48–49 and 4,114–119, but throughout his critique he never mentions Origen, who in fact never supported this theory. Analogously, Nyssen in his critique of the preexistence of bare souls in *De anima* neither mentions Origen nor—in my view—criticises his thought.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> This is rightly remarked also by Susanna Elm, "Gregory's Women: Creating a Philosopher's Family," in *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections*, eds. J. Bortnes–T. Hägg (Copenhagen, 2006), 171–192, who underlines Gregory's acquaintance with the works of Porphyry and Iamblichus, which helped him "in his own task of creating the true Christian philosopher" (186).

<sup>381</sup> See, e.g., S. Rubenson, "The Cappadocians on the Areopagus," in *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections*, 113–132.

<sup>382</sup> See A. Guillaumont, *Les Kephalaia Gnostica d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les grecs et chez les Syriens* (Paris, 1962), 161.

<sup>383</sup> Prinzivalli, "The Controversy about Origen," 207 and 213, observes that in the 230's the accusation of supporting the salvation of the devil was levelled against Origen in the context of public debates, because it was difficult to propagate this idea in more popular milieux; Origen only received a disciplinary sanction and was not prevented from teaching in Caesarea.

<sup>384</sup> See my "Preexistence of Souls." Likewise, Nazianzen's critique of metempsychosis, which is closely related to that of the preexistence of souls, is certainly not directed against Origen. According to some critics, it rather addresses Orphic ideas: M. Herrero de Jáuregui, "A quién dirige Gregorio de Nazianzo su crítica de la reencarnación (*De anima* 22–52)?" *Adamantius* 13 (2007) 231–246, who thinks that Gregory's target was a long Orphic poem in 24 rhapsodies, preserved in frs. 90–359 Bernabé.

Nazianzen himself expresses all his esteem and reverence for Origen in his *Or.* 2,107, when he states that he has drawn his exegesis of Gen 1:3 from Origen, perhaps from his Commentary on Jonah, but it is not to be ruled out that it was from his Commentary on Genesis itself. Gregory declares: "Concerning these topics I have learnt from a wise and erudite man [σοφός], who is able to grasp the profundity of a prophet." Gregory Nazianzen's admiration for Origen is also attested by the *Suda*, s.v. *Origen*: Nazianzen defined Origen "the pumice stone of us all," that is to say, the author who sharpens and refines the thought of those who read his works. What is more, an earlier and very reliable source, the sixth-century theologian Gobar (*ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 232, p. 291b), testifies that in a letter Gregory called Origen "lover of virtue" or "of the Good": ὁ Θεόλογος Γρηγόριος ἐν ἐπιστολαῖς φιλόκαλον αὐτὸν λέγει. Even if given later, the title *Philocalia* is entirely appropriate for a collection of extracts from Origen's works! Indeed, Origen's influence on Nazianzen's thought is remarkable, as has been recently stressed, with reason, by Christopher Beeley.<sup>385</sup>

It is not by chance that Gregory's Oration 39 (*In sancta lumina*), devoted to baptism, opens up with the expression "My Jesus," which is a precise Origenian reminiscence, as has been rightly noted by Panayiotis Tzamalikos.<sup>386</sup> The allegorical interpretation of the Baptism of Christ that from Ch. 14 onwards Gregory Nazianzen offers is by no means dissimilar from that

<sup>385</sup> C. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God. In Your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford, 2008) both highlights the soteriological nature of Gregory's Christology and shows that he is the most important example of the "Origenist" Trinitarian tradition of fourth-century Asia Minor (I would put Nyssen aside him, however, and say "Origenian"). Beeley also insists on the influence exerted by Gregory Thaumaturgus on Nyssen, especially in Christology. Athanasius and Didymus, on the contrary, would not seem to have had an impact on his thought. J.P. Lieggi, *La cetra di Cristo* (Rome, 2009) 188–193, too, rightly highlights the deep continuity between Origen's and Nazianzen's theological thoughts, especially with respect to apophaticism. The closeness of Nazianzen to Nyssen is clear particularly in regard to apophaticism. For this theme in Nazianzen see most recently D. Giulea, "The Divine Essence, that Inaccessible *Kabod* Enthroned in Heaven," *Numen* 57 (2010) 1–29, especially in reference to his second theological oration, *Or.* 28,3. On this theme in Gregory of Nyssa see, e.g., my "Apopatismo cristiano e relativismo pagano: un confronto tra filosofi platonici," in *Verità e mistero nel pluralismo culturale della tarda antichità*, ed. A.M. Mazzanti (Bologna, 2009), 101–169; Ead., "Silenzio apofatico in Gregorio di Nissa: un confronto con Plotino e un'indagine delle ascendenze origeniane," in *Silenzio e Parola* (Rome, 2012), 367–388; Ch. Curzel, "Gli ossimori nelle Omelie sul Cantico dei Cantici e nella Vita di Mosè di Gregorio di Nissa," *Augustinianum* 51 (2011) 47–84. The very concept of time with which Basil refutes Eunomius *AE* 2,13 comes from Origen, as is noted by Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy*, 315.

<sup>386</sup> *Origen: Philosophy*, 435–438.

of Gregory Nyssen. In Ch. 15 Nazianzen considers the fact that John did not want to baptise Jesus to be a sign; for it is Jesus who will baptise John soon after, with a baptism of death which, however, means salvation. This is a purifying baptism of suffering that destroys evil and leaves only the Good:

What is fire? The *consummation of what is light and unworthy* and the fervour of the Spirit. What is the ax? The *amputation of what is incurable in the soul* [...] What is the sword? The *Logos's cutting, which separates the Good from evil*.

Gregory envisages an extreme baptism of death which purifies the soul and brings about its salvation. In Ch. 17 Gregory lists five kinds of baptism, all of which are salvific, the fifth being the baptism of repentance and tears. It is also noteworthy that he repeatedly uses the noun διόρθωσις to indicate correction and rectification; it is the same substantive that in Eusebius, Marcellus of Ancyra, and other authors is used to designate the process of rectification that leads to the eventual apokatastasis.

Nazianzen's following observation, which resumes the notion of an extreme, harsh baptism, especially bears on his inclination to the apokatastasis theory. Those—he says—who do not follow Christ's way, but their own, will have to undergo a purification after death, an extreme, eschatological (τελευταῖον) baptism in fire, long and hard, which will take place after one's physical death and liberate the soul from evil, just as fire frees iron from rust. The metaphor is the same as that used by Nyssen to indicate the purification of souls by means of the image of metal purified by fire from spurious concretions. Just as baptism produces the remission of sins, so does this eschatological baptism of fire:

Therefore, if they wish, let them follow our path, which is also that of Christ; otherwise, let them follow their own. Perhaps, on the other side, they will *be baptised by means of fire* [τῷ πυρὶ βαπτισθήσονται], *in the extreme baptism* [τῷ τελευταίῳ βαπτίσματι], that which is *more painful and moreover longer* [τῷ ἐπιπονωτέρῳ τε καὶ μακροτέρῳ], that which *devours matter like straw and completely consumes the lightness/unworthiness of every kind of evilness* [ἐσθίει ὡς χόρτον τὴν ὕλην καὶ δαπανᾷ πάσης κακίας κουφότηα]. (PG 36,356BC)

Every kind of evilness is unworthy of God. This extreme baptism through fire will eliminate all that which is unworthy of God. It will be *long*-lasting, but not *everlasting*, since it will come to an end when all evil has been devoured by the purifying fire. The mention of straw is an allusion to 1 Cor 3:14–15, in which Paul foresees that those who have built up their construction with straw will have their work destroyed by fire in the world to come, but they themselves will be saved through fire. Neither Paul nor Nazianzen speak of people who will pass through this fire and will *not* be saved. The very lightness of this straw, which represents evilness, also alludes to the ontological

non-subsistence of evil, which is another major premise to the theory of apokatastasis. The baptism of which Gregory Nazianzen is speaking is destined to those who have continued to go on along a path that is not the way of Christ: it is not for those who have repented, but for those who have endured in their error. Gregory does not foresee an *eternal* condemnation for these people, but a long and terrible eschatological suffering that entails a death, which, however, is not the death of the *sinner*, but the death of *evilness*. Its result is the salvation of the sinner himself, albeit through suffering. Gregory Nazianzen is here expressing the same idea as Origen, Basil, and Gregory of Nyssa do, that otherworldly suffering destroys evil and produces the purification and salvation of the sinner. This is why Nazianzen at the end of his piece exhorts those who want to avoid this drastic eschatological baptism, destined for those who have refused to follow Christ, to repent. He underlines God's joy for the rectification of the sinner, using again διόρθωσις for the third time and inserting clear echoes from Isaiah:

Do wash yourselves and become pure, if you are scarlet due to sin, or worse, if you have the colour of blood, let yourselves be rendered snow-white, and if you are crimson, men full of blood, hasten toward the whiteness of snow. Let yourselves be purified; purify yourselves, because God does not rejoice in anything else so much as he does in the *rectification and salvation* [διόρθώσει καὶ σωτηρίᾳ] of a human being. This is the aim of every discourse and every mystery and sacrament.

Every discourse, every word in Scripture, and every mystery, in reference both to liturgy and to salvific economy, is aimed at human salvation. This is the very goal of divine Providence.

The notion of a "baptism of fire" for those who have sinned seriously was manifestly inspired by Origen, who developed it in *Hom. in Ier.* 2,3:<sup>387</sup> Jesus baptises "in Holy Spirit and fire" (Luke 3:16); now

it is not the case that he baptises the same person in Holy Spirit and fire, but he baptises the saint in Holy Spirit, whereas the person who, after believing and becoming worthy of the Holy Spirit, has sinned again, well, Christ washes this person *in fire* [...] Therefore, blessed is the one who is baptised in Holy Spirit and needs no *baptism of fire* [βαπτίσματος τοῦ ἀπὸ πυρός] [...] God is "a fire that consumes" [Hebr 12:29], and "God is light" [1John 1:15]: a consuming fire for sinners, light for the just and saints. [...] Who is the one who is not saved in the second resurrection? It is the one who needs the *baptism of fire* [βαπτίσματος τοῦ ἀπὸ πυρός], when he comes to that fire, and that fire tests him and finds "wood, hay, and straw" [1Cor 3:12] to burn away.

<sup>387</sup> See also *Hom. in Luc.* 24; *Hom. in Ez.* 1,13.

Nazianzen is close to Nyssen—who in turn drew on Origen—in assuming that baptism is indispensable to salvation, but also that those who have not had it in this life, or those who had it, but are still in need of purification, will receive a post-mortem baptism that will purify them, albeit through suffering.<sup>388</sup> However, while Nyssen stresses more the idea of baptism as an anticipation and preparation of the final apokatastasis—for instance in that it entails the restoration of the image of God in the human being—, Nazianzen insists more on baptism as a fusion between human and divine.<sup>389</sup> But this fusion, too, is an anticipation of an eschatological reality: that of the final θέωσις.

The extreme, eschatological baptism described by Nazianzen is punishment in hell seen as purifying; it is not simply punishment in purgatory as distinct from that in hell, which indeed neither Nazianzen nor Nyssen nor Origen distinguished. This is confirmed by *Or.* 40,36 PG 35,409D3–5, in which he reports the doctrine of apokatastasis, that of his close friend Nyssen, without rejecting it, but rather presenting it as the only one that is “worthy of God” (Origen’s core principle). Moreover, exactly like Origen, here Gregory Nazianzen interprets Isa 50:11 in reference to the interior suffering caused by sin. He also takes over Origen’s interpretation of the “mountains” as “angels.”<sup>390</sup> Then he goes on to say:

*Let us escape, I beg you, only from one kind of light: that which comes from the bitter fire* [τοῦ πικροῦ πυρός]: let us not proceed in the light of our fire, in the flame by which we have been burnt. For I know of a *purifying fire* [καθαρτήριον], which *Christ came to kindle* on earth, *Christ who is called “fire” himself* with metaphorical and mystical words. *This fire consumes matter and the evil disposition* [ἀναλωτικόν τοῦτο τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῆς πονηρᾶς ἐστὶν ἕξεως], and he wants that it is kindled as soon as possible. For he ardently wants *the Good to be made immediately, since even inflamed coals he gives us in order to help us* [καὶ πῦρὸς ἀνθρακας δίδωσιν ἡμῖν εἰς βοήθειαν]. *I also know a fire that is not only purifying, but punishing too* [καὶ κολαστήριον]: *it is the fire of Sodom*, which pours down like rain on all sinners, mingled with divine storm and sulphur; it is that which is prepared for the devil and his angels; it is that which goes forward before the face of the Lord and burns his enemies all around, and the one which is even more fearful than these are: *the one that is mentioned along with the worm that does not die* [τῷ ἀκοιμήτῳ σκώληκι], *a fire that, for sinners, cannot be*

<sup>388</sup> Full demonstration in my “Baptism in Gregory of Nyssa’s Theology.”

<sup>389</sup> This is especially remarked by S. Elm, “‘Oh Paradoxical Fusion!’: Gregory of Nazianzus on Baptism and Cosmology,” in R. Boustani–A. Yoshiko Reed (eds.), *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions* (Cambridge, 2004), 296–315.

<sup>390</sup> “Light to the just, forever; you cast light in a wonderful way from the most antique mountains’ is said in reference to God, indicating with ‘mountains’ the angelic powers that collaborate with us for the sake of the good.”

*quenched, but endures during the future aeon* [μὴ σβεννύμενον ἀλλὰ διαιωνίζων]. For all these aspects pertain to the destructive power [ἀφανιστικῆς], unless it is not dear to someone to think, even in this case, that *this fire is applied out of love for human beings, and in a way that is worthy of the One who punishes* [εἰ μὴ τῷ φίλον κἀνταῦθα νοεῖν τοῦτο φιλανθρωπότερον, καὶ τοῦ Κολάζοντος ἐπαξίως].

In this perspective, which is the same as Origen's and Nyssen's, divine fire is purifying for the sinner, whereas it is destructive for evil, death, and evilness, from which the sinner is finally liberated. Even in the case of destructive, punitive fire Gregory Nazianzen clearly looks for God's love for humanity. Only in this way, indeed—that is, only if this fire has a positive aim—is it possible to square the idea of punishment with that of a God who loves sinners. Indeed, this fire is Christ himself, Gregory states; Isaac of Nineveh and John of Dalyatha, other supporters of apokatastasis whom I shall treat later, will remember this characterisation. Gregory Nazianzen manifestly wants to relate even punishing fire to a purifying aim. He is very explicit in making his preference clear, since he says that the conception he prefers—that is to say, that of apokatastasis—is also that which is more inspired by love for humanity, and therefore is conceived “in a way worthy of God,” ἐπαξίως. He does not say, “in a way worthier of God,” with a comparative, but he uses an absolute connotation: it is the *only* way that is worthy of God. For it is God who punishes, and God is the absolute Good. Now, it is notable that the action of inferring eschatology from an argument based on the determination of “what is worthy of God,” “what becomes God,” is typical of Origen and was taken over especially by Athanasius and Nyssen. Origen, for instance in *Comm. in Io.* 6,57, observed that universal submission to Christ and God is to be understood as universal salvation because only in this case would it be “worthy of the goodness of the God of the universe.” Nazianzen takes over this same argument and declares that to institute a fire that is not only punishing, but also purifying, and thus admit of apokatastasis, is *worthy* of God, which immediately entails that the eternal damnation of some, punished without being purified, is *unworthy* of a God who loves humans. Indeed, Origen's influence on Nazianzen is strong and variegated.

The idea of the otherworldly fire as purifying is repeated by Gregory in *Carm.* 2,1,1,545 ff., PG 37,1010, in which he calls “purifying” precisely the fire of the other world, that of the last day (ἡματι δ' ὕστατίῳ), which will discern and judge everyone's deeds and will devour evil: πῦρ κρίνησι καθάρσιον ἔργματα πάντων, / βοσκόμενον κακίης κούφην φύσιν ἀυαλήην τε. It is notable that Gregory repeats the notion of the “lightness of evilness,” both because it is unworthy and because it is assimilated to the biblical straw, and also because from the ontological point of view evil is non-being.



Nazianzen does speak, with the Gospel, of external darkness for the wicked, who will be thrown there after the Judgement, but nowhere does he specify that these will remain out there *forever*. In the same way, he speaks, to be sure, of the otherworldly fire and worm, but I have already expounded how he, like Origen, Eusebius, and the two other Cappadocians, applies to this fire and to otherworldly punishment only the adjective αἰώνιος, and never αἰδιος, which means “eternal” in the absolute sense, and which, very significantly, Nazianzen uses *only* in reference to life and beatitude, and *never* in reference to fire, death, and punishment.

In *Or.* 3,7, PG 35,524B, Nazianzen refers again to 1 Cor 3:12–15, and again he interprets the divine fire therein as purifying; for it will consume in each person anything that is unworthy of the eternal life (“the straw of evil”).<sup>391</sup> Indeed, Gregory often emphasises that God’s first aim is purification and instruction, even by means of terrible threats in order to avert humans from the “way of death” (*Or.* 16,6):

He opposes the extreme desolation to beauty, where he speaks of God’s wrath, which breaks the earth: “ahead, the garden of delight; behind, the valley of destruction.” These are dreadful things, the culmination of dreadful things, as far as the affliction extends only to present realities, and perception does not yet torment us with a harsher suffering. For, as it is the case with illnesses, the suffering that afflicts a person is worse than that which is not present. And the vessels of God’s wrath contain things that are even more tremendous than these; may it not happen that you ever have to experience them. And do not let yourselves be surprised to take refuge into God’s mercy, trying to persuade with tears the One who is always inclined to pity, and thus avoid the consequences of wrath by means of repentance. This is still lenience and mild pedagogy, the beginning of a beating that forms those who are still little. It is the smoke of wrath, the proem of the tests; it is not yet the fire that burns up, the culmination of movement; these are not the pieces of coal full of flames, the extremity of the scourge. For a part of the scourge is made up by *threats*, another is extended; a part is held with violence, and another *persuades*. Likewise, *teaching* people by means of both beating and threats [πληγῇ παιδεύων καὶ τῇ ἀπειλῇ] and using his wrath *in order to open up a way*, for an *overflow of goodness*, God begins with lighter *remedies*, lest he need *more radical remedies*, but, if he is compelled, he resorts even to the more radical remedies *in his pedagogic work* [παιδεύων δὲ καὶ τοῖς μείζουσιν, εἰ πρὸς ταῦτα ἐκβιασθεῖη].

Even the most radical punishments are not even called “punishments,” but “remedies,” and are declared to serve a pedagogic aim (παιδεύω). What

<sup>391</sup> Cf. *Carm.* I 2,15,99 = PG 37,773.

seems to be wrath and punishment is in fact a path to salvation. Nazianzen in fact leaves no room for a punishment that is not therapeutic and pedagogic.

To be sure, Gregory does state that "it is better to be punished and purified now than to be handed to the torture in the world to come, which will constitute *a period of punishment* more than of purification [...]" for in Hades there is no confession or reform [διόρθωσις] for the dead. God has confined life and action to this world and the examination [ἐξέτασιν] of these actions to the other" (*Or.* 16,7, PG 35,944BC). The denial of διόρθωσις for the dead is blatantly contradicted by other passages by Nazianzen himself that I have already cited, which present otherworldly διόρθωσις as the very premise of apokatastasis. But of course the rhetorical, hortatory nature of this passage must be taken into account. What is more, even in the present passage Gregory does not state that punishment in the other world will be eternal. Indeed, the very fact that he speaks of "a period of punishment" indicates that this punishment, albeit long, will be limited. As for the exhortation to doing good and abstaining from evil in this world, in order to avoid horrible and extremely long pains in the next, this is found in Gregory of Nyssa's *De anima et resurrectione* as well, in which it is developed by Macrina. And in the case of Gregory of Nyssa there can be no doubt that he supported the doctrine of apokatastasis. Moreover, I have already pointed out how Gregory Nazianzen's notion of an eschatological "extreme baptism" is therapeutic and cathartic.

Nazianzen's ideas concerning the eschatological consummation and the role of Christ in it reveal further similarities with Origen's. In his fourth theological oration *De Filio* (*Or.* 30), Gregory observes that the Son has taken upon himself humanity with all of its sins, "in order to *consume in himself the worse part* [δαπανήσῃ τὸ χεῖρον], just as fire consumes wax," and that he "measures everything with his sufferings by means of his *love for humanity* [φιλανθρωπίᾳ]." In 30,6 he affirms that "the darkness of evil will be completely dispelled from everywhere" (διαφυγόντος παντάπασιν). This makes the eventual apokatastasis possible. Indeed, Gregory expressly speaks of the final apokatastasis as the union of all rational creatures with God and their θέωσις:

*God will be "all in all" in the time of apokatastasis* [ἔσται δὲ ὁ Θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως], when we are *no more many* [μηκέτι πολλὰ ὦμεν], as we are now, in movements (of will) and passions [τοῖς κινήμασι καὶ τοῖς πάθεσιν], and we shall not bring in us little or nothing of God, but *we shall all be entirely in the form of God* [ὅλοι θεοειδεῖς], able to *receive God entirely, and only God* [ὅλου Θεοῦ χωρητικοὶ καὶ μόνου]. This is the *perfection* [τελείωσις]

to which we aspire, and it is above all Paul himself who *guarantees* us this [...] he who elsewhere says that Christ will be “*all and in all*” [τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν παντί].<sup>392</sup>

Gregory's description of apokatastasis as unity and the ultimate *telos* is evidently grounded in 1Cor 15:28, the same Scriptural passage that was Origen's and Nyssen's favourite in support of apokatastasis (Nazianzen also shares Origen's and Nyssen's argument that the eventual submission of Christ to God in 1Cor 15:28 is not a submission of Christ's divinity, but of Christ's humanity, in the third theological oration *De Filio*, Or. 29,18<sup>393</sup>). The very way in which Nazianzen conceives the unity of apokatastasis is the same as Origen's and Eusebius's:<sup>394</sup> not in the sense of a confusion of substances and a loss of individual identities, but fundamentally concord and union of wills, in that all will entirely adhere to the Good, who is God, and there will be no more different movements of the soul's will or passions. From the whole of this oration *De Filio*, moreover, it is again clear that for Nazianzen the blessed *telos* of apokatastasis entirely depends on Christ.

This is further confirmed by what follows. Like Gregory of Nyssa in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, so does also Nazianzen declare humanity to be finally restored thanks to its entire subsumption into the “body of Christ”:

Christ's suffering, thanks to which *all of us*—and *not one but not another*—*have been restored* [...] All of us, who participate in the same Adam, were deceived by the serpent and killed by sin; *all of us have been saved by the heavenly Adam*.  
(Or. 33,9, PG 36,225B)

This is an expression of universal salvation. Nazianzen closely reminds me of Origen, when in *Princ.* 3,6,3 he observes that “*not only in few or in many, but 'in all'* God ‘will be all’, when there exists no more death, nor death's sting, nor evil any more, absolutely: then God will truly be ‘all in all.’” This passage, as I have shown, was present to Eusebius's mind as well.<sup>395</sup> Likewise Nazianzen, in the passage under consideration, insists that all will

<sup>392</sup> Ed. J. Barbel, *Gregor von Nazianz. Die fünf theologischen Reden* (Düsseldorf, 1963), 170–216; the passage I have cited corresponds to PG 36,112. Scholars who agree in seeing there an allusion to the doctrine of apokatastasis are: Prinzivalli, *Magister*, 129–130; J. Mossay, *La mort et l'au-delà dans s. Grégoire de Nazianze* (Louvain, 1966), 178; J.R. Sachs, “Apocatastasis in Patristic Theology,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 54 (1993) 617–640, *praes.* 629 ff.; Ludlow, *Salvation*, 36.

<sup>393</sup> This, however, not in a full-blown argument, but only as an allusion: ταῦτα τὰ τῆς ἀγνωμοσύνης ῥήματα [...] τὴν ὑποταγήν [...] γνώσεως, τίς μὲν φύσεως λόγος, τίς δὲ λόγος οἰκονομίας.

<sup>394</sup> See above in this same chapter, the section on Eusebius.

<sup>395</sup> See above in this chapter, the section on Eusebius.

be restored, and it is not the case that one will be restored whereas another will not. "All" means the whole of humanity, all of those who are in the death brought about by Adam, which Nazianzen seems to identify with spiritual death, the death determined by sin. These "all" are said by Gregory to be saved by the other Adam, Christ, and to be restored. The verb used by Gregory is ἀποκαθίστημι, and this restoration is precisely the apokatastasis which Gregory, once again, has depend on Christ and conceives as the consequence of Christ's incarnation and crucifixion:

He came in human form to *restore humanity*, extended his holy corporeal form up to the extremities of the earth, collected all mortals and *formed them into unity*, and placed them into the arms of the great Deity after *washing away every stain* by means of the blood of the Lamb, and, qua head of mortal humanity, he *lifted it up onto the path to heaven*.

(*Carm.* 1,2,1,161–167, PG 37,535)

The extension of Christ's corporeal form up to the extremities of the earth, mentioned by Nazianzen, is a reference to the cosmic dimension of Christ and his cross, which has a close parallel in Gregory of Nyssa as well. In *Contra Eunomium* GNO 2,120,25–29 Nyssen—as I have explained in the section devoted to him—drawing on Eph 3:18 observes that the four dimensions of the Cross, indicated by its four arms, make it clear that "all heavenly and infernal realities and all the extremes of all that exists are governed and kept together by the One who, in the symbol of the cross, manifested this great and ineffable power" (GNO 2,121–122). Similarly, in *De tridui spatio*, Gregory returns to the cosmic symbolism of Christ's Cross, from which he deduces the universality of its salvific effect (GNO IX/1, 298–299), a concept on which Origen had insisted a great deal.<sup>396</sup> Paul "saw that this figure/symbol of the cross, divided into four arms spreading out from the central intersection, means the power and the providence, which pervades everything, of the One who was manifested upon it [...] and makes it clear that there exists absolutely *no being who is not under the protection of the divine nature, above the heavens, under the earth, and up to the extreme horizons of all that exists*" (ibid. 300–301). This is why Gregory in *Oratio catechetica* 32 can say that Christ, while spreading his arms on the cross, embraced and unified all, attracting all to himself, with a reminiscence of John 12:32. Christ's Cross is therefore the "recapitulation" of the whole cosmos. Analogously, in *Carm. dogm.* 2,76–77 Nazianzen describes the work of Christ as a universal purification and cancellation of sins:

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<sup>396</sup> See Ramelli, "The Universal and Eternal Validity," 210–221.

He offered his own blood to God and *purified the whole world* [κόσμον δ' ἐκάθη-  
ρεν ἅπαντα]; he took up the cross and *clove sins to it* [πάγην δ' ἤλοισιν ἀμαρτάς].

And in *Or.* 42 it is again the work of Christ that is celebrated as universally salvific: with it, “today *salvation has been brought to the universe*, to whatever is visible and whatever is invisible [...] today the gates of hell are broken open.” This further confirms the thesis I have put forward before: not only did Gregory of Nazianzus embrace the apokatastasis theory, like Origen and Gregory Nyssen, but, again like these two Christian philosophers, also thought that it essentially results from the work of Christ. It is no accident that Nazianzen—like Eusebius<sup>397</sup>—refers the term ἀποκατάστασις to the Ascension of Christ as well, in *Or.* 41,11: for in the Ascension of Christ Gregory also sees the ascension of all of humanity.<sup>398</sup>

On the basis of the Bible, Gregory Nazianzen, like Origen and Gregory Nyssen, maintains that sinners will be judged and punished for their transgressions both in this world and in the world to come. In particular, on the day of Judgement, God “will reason with us and will oppose us our sins, will put them before us, like bitter accusers, calling us to render reason of the honour of the image that has been blurred and contaminated by sin” (Greg. Naz. *Or.* 16,8, PG 35,944D1–945A5). This notion goes back to Origen and is particularly developed in Nyssen’s “theology of the image.” The blessed, after the Judgement, will enjoy the eternal contemplation of the Trinity; the others will recognise themselves guilty and judge themselves deserving of suffering (αὐτοὺς ὑφ’ ἐαυτῶν κατεγνωσμένους, καὶ κατακεκριμένους), a suffering that Nazianzen, like Origen, characterises as a threat (“as the prophet said, scaring me”), as spiritual, and as consisting in being kept far removed from God and in regretting one’s sins (*Or.* 16,8–9). Indeed, in *Carm.* 1,2,15,100 (PG 37,773) too, the biblical “worm that does not die” is each sinner’s guilty conscience. However, by no means does Nazianzen state that otherworldly suffering will endure eternally. In *Or.* 16,9, God’s aim in his Judgement is to “reclaim the dignity of the image” which was sullied by sins. But God wants to have it shine forth again, in its worthiness. I have already shown how Nazianzen regarded the thesis that the otherworldly fire always has a purifying function as the only one that is “worthy of God.”

But those which seem to me to be the most important passages of all with respect to the demonstration that Gregory Nazianzen too embraced the

<sup>397</sup> See above in this same chapter, the section on Eusebius.

<sup>398</sup> On Gregory’s soteriology see also D. Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, Ma., 1979), 167; Daley, *Hope*, 84; Sachs, “Apokatastasis,” ch. 3.

apokatastasis theory are *In S. Pascha* (Or. 45; PG 36,633) and *In Theophaniam* (Or. 38; PG 36,324), two long pieces in which the very same words are employed.<sup>399</sup> Therefore, I shall cite only one. Here, like Gregory Nyssen and Methodius, who very probably followed Origen in this,<sup>400</sup> Nazianzen too presents physical death as providential, because it imposes a limit to sins, and thereby it also limits the punishment for these sins, which thus cannot possibly be eternal. And this is precisely apokatastasis. The punishment inflicted by God after the fall is in fact an act of *φιλανθρωπία*. Indeed, I have pointed out that Nazianzen, like Clement, Origen, and Nyssen, is convinced that all punishments inflicted by God are in fact established for the sake of the sinner, in order to be beneficial to the sinner. Let me quote Nazianzen's passage, at least in its most important sections:

[God's plan for humanity was that] the *good* belonging to the one who had chosen it would be no less than that of the One who provided its seeds, cultivator of immortal plants [φυτῶν ἀθανάτων γεωργόν] and of divine thoughts as well, both the simpler and the more perfect, naked on account of simplicity and a life without artifice, with *no covering or obstacle of any sort*. For this is how *it was appropriate* [ἔπρεπεν] *for the human being to be at the beginning* [τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς]. And God gave the human being a law, matter for free will [ὑλὴν τῷ αὐτεξουσῷ], and the law was a commandment regarding the plants the human being was allowed to take and the one he could not touch. The latter was the tree of knowledge, which was *neither planted with an evil intention at the beginning, nor forbidden out of hostility* [...], but it is good if participated in aptly [...], while it is not yet good for those who are still behind. [...] Because of the *devil's deception* [...], Adam forgot the commandment given to him [...], and at the same time, *due to evilness, was chased away from the tree of life, from Paradise, and from God, and was covered with skin tunics* [δερματίνους ἀμφιέννυται χιτῶνας], which probably are *the heavier and mortal flesh, which puts up resistance* [τὴν παχυτέραν σάρκα καὶ θνητὴν καὶ ἀντίτυπον]. And then for the first time he became aware of his own shame, and hid from God. And the human being *profited something even here: death, and the fact that sin would be interrupted, so that evil* (or: the damage) *should not be immortal* [χερδαίνει μὲν τι κἀνταῦθα, τὸν θάνατον, καὶ τὸ διακοπῆναι τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, ἵνα μὴ ἀθάνατον ᾖ τὸ κακόν]. And so *punishment became an act of love for humanity*; for I am persuaded that *this is the way in which God punishes* [καὶ γίνεται φιλανθρωπία ἢ τιμωρία. οὕτω γὰρ πείθεται κολάζειν Θεόν].

At the very beginning, before the fall, the human being was exactly as God the Creator had planned. The commandment given by God was not invented out of an evil intention, but was rather aimed at allowing human free will to

<sup>399</sup> The repetition was intended. See P. Gallay, *La vie de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (Lyon-Paris, 1943), 159.

<sup>400</sup> See my "L'Inno a Cristo-Logos."

be exerted, that the human being could *choose* the Good. But the human being chose evil, and evilness separated it from God, who is the supreme Good. Gregory Nazianzen, exactly like Nyssen, insists on the deception of the devil as the main cause for the fall.<sup>401</sup> And he clearly espouses the same interpretation of the “skin tunics” as offered by Origen and Nyssen:<sup>402</sup> they do not represent the body *tout court*, which the human being—like all creatures, including all rational creatures—had already before the fall, but the heavy, thick, and mortal body, which is an obstacle to spiritual progress. Indeed, Nazianzen explicitly says that at the beginning, before the fall, the human being was “without any obstacle.” What is more, Gregory Nazianzen shares with Origen, Nyssen, and Methodius<sup>403</sup> the interpretation of the death imposed by God as a benefit and a means to avoid eternal damnation. Which further makes it clear that Nazianzen adhered to the apokatastasis doctrine. Physical death interrupts sin, so that the evil caused by sin and the damage that is identifiable with the punishment of sin may not be eternal. In this way, Nazianzen observes that what seemed to be a punishment without benefit for the punished person (τιμωρία) turns out to be an act of love for humanity (φιλανθρωπία). Indeed, it is a κόλασις, i.e., a punishment that is beneficial to the punished person.

What Nazianzen adds at this point is again an argument that is typical of Origen and his followers, and that I have already pointed out in Nazianzen’s Oration 40: the only punishment that is worthy of God is that which is beneficial to the sinner. The remarkable difference is that, while in the other passage Nazianzen, as I have observed, ascribed to others—albeit clearly showing his preference for it—the doctrine of apokatastasis as the only eschatological doctrine that is worthy of God in that it is φιλόανθρωπον, here he is manifestly speaking in the first person: οὕτω γὰρ πείθομαι κολλάζειν Θεόν, “I am persuaded that this is the way in which God punishes.” The only punishment worthy of God is dictated by love for humanity, that in which γίνεται φιλανθρωπία ἢ τιμωρία. It is also to be noticed, with Peter Bouteneff,<sup>404</sup> that in his interpretation of the facts of the Biblical narrative on

<sup>401</sup> On Adam’s sin as a deception for Nazianzen, which is evident from the passage that I have quoted, see also J.-M. Mathieu, “*Hubris* et péché des origines: remarques sur le cas de Grégoire de Nazianze,” *Kentron* 22 (2006) 115–134.

<sup>402</sup> Demonstration in my *Gregorio Sull’Anima*. Both Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory Nyssen had Origen’s *Commentary on Genesis* available.

<sup>403</sup> See above the respective sections.

<sup>404</sup> “‘Whatever That Was!’ Paradise According to Gregory of Nazianzus,” in *Studia Patristica* 47 (2010) 141–147.

the Paradise Gregory in *Or.* 38 sides with Origen in seeing it as an allegorical account (ὅστις ποτὲ ἦν ὁ παράδεισος; the interpretation of the “tree of life” as θεωρία, etc.), against the reactions that Origen’s *Commentary on Genesis* had aroused on the part of those who wanted to understand that narrative literally. I would add that Eriugena too, many centuries after, will still side with Origen.<sup>405</sup>

The immediate following of the passage I cited, in § 9 of *Or.* 45 in *S. Pascha*, further confirms the key role played by Christ, according to Gregory Nazianzen, in the restoration of humanity:

The human being had been educated by means of many experiences on account of many sins, into which the root of evilness [κακίας ῥίζα] had developed, according to different causes and times, by means of reason, the law, the prophets, benefits, threats, plagues, floods [...] in the end it needed a stronger medication against more serious illnesses, reciprocal murders, adulteries [...], and the last and first of all evils, idolatry, the worship of creatures instead of the Creator. All this *needed a greater help, and did receive a greater help*. This help was the very *Logos of God*, existing before the aeons, invisible, incomprehensible, incorporeal, the principle from the principle and the beginning from the beginning [ἡ ἐκ τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀρχή], light from the light, *source of life and immortality*, the stamped image from the archetype [...] the Logos descended onto its own image, and *bore flesh for the sake of my flesh, and mingled with an intellectual soul for the sake of my soul, purifying the similar with the similar* [σάρκα φορεῖ διὰ τὴν σάρκα, καὶ ψυχὴ νοερὰ διὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν μίγνυται, ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὁμοίον ἀνακαθαίρων]. And the Logos *becomes a human being* in all respects, apart from sin. He was born from a Virgin, who had been purified in advance both in her soul and in her body by the Spirit. For it was necessary that the birth be honoured, but virginity be honoured first [...] One and the same being was formed from two opposites: flesh and spirit. *One of these deified the other; the other was deified* [ἐκ δύο τῶν ἐναντίων, σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος, ὧν τὸ μὲν ἐθέωσε, τὸ δὲ ἐθεώθη]. O extraordinary mixture! O paradoxical fusion! The One who Is, becomes; the one who is uncreated is created. The one who cannot be contained is contained. *The rational soul functions as a mediator between the Godhead and the thickness of the flesh* [διὰ μέσης ψυχῆς νοερᾶς μεσιτευσούσης θεότητι καὶ σαρκὸς παχύτητι]. And the one who is rich becomes poor. Indeed, he becomes poor in my flesh, *that I may become rich in his divinity*. The one who is full becomes empty. Indeed, he becomes empty of his own glory for a short while, *that I may participate in the fullness of that one*. What a richness of *goodness* [τῆς ἀγαθότητος]! What a mystery is this, which concerns me! I obtained a participation in the image, and I did not keep it; the Logos participates in my flesh in order to *save the image as well and to make flesh immortal*.

<sup>405</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on Eriugena.



Another similarity with Origen on a very peculiar doctrine interestingly emerges. The Logos of God does not only take on human flesh, but also a human rational soul, on order to save, not only the human body, but also the human soul and intellect (Christ “bore flesh for the sake of my flesh, and mingled with an intellectual soul for the sake of my soul, purifying the similar with the similar”). The very same line is to be found in Nazianzen’s *Ep.* 101 as well: “What [the Logos] has not assumed, he has not healed, whereas *what is unified with his divinity is also saved* [...] Divinity joined only to *flesh* is not a human being, nor joined only to a *soul*, nor to both apart from the *intellect*, which is *the most essential part of the human being*. Keep then *the whole of the human being*, and mingle the divinity with it, that you may benefit me in my wholeness.” Note the Origenian notion, taken over by Gregory Nyssen as well, that the human being is primarily the intellectual soul.

Even the notion of the mediating function performed by the rational soul in Christ between the divinity and the human body that are equally present in Christ is distinctively Origenian (“The rational soul functions as a mediator between the Godhead and the thickness of the flesh”). Nazianzen also takes over Origen’s and Athanasius’s fundamental doctrine of Christ’s inhumanation as the basis for the *θέωσις* of humanity. The Spirit, the divine component in Christ, deified the flesh, the human component. The inhumanation of Christ is indeed the *conditio sine qua non* for the *θέωσις* of human beings, but Torstein Tollefsen is right to remark that *θέωσις* for Nazianzen is not tantamount to a substantial confusion of human and divine with the consequent vanishing of human nature;<sup>406</sup> this is not transformed into the divine nature so to become a hypostasis of the Trinity, but rather participates in divine life.<sup>407</sup> And the role of Christ in this is fundamental for Nazianzen. John McGuckin has observed: “It was Gregory who underscored the inalienable connection of the Christ mystery to the doctrine of salvation. In short, for Gregory, if the soteriological principle could not be demonstrated at every turn, the Christology had to be suspect.”<sup>408</sup> It is absolutely true that

<sup>406</sup> T.Th. Tollefsen, “*Theosis* according to Gregory,” in *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections*, eds. J. Bortnes–T. Hägg (Copenhagen, 2006), 257–270, *praes.* 259 and 269–270.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid. 269–270. On *θέωσις* in Nazianzen and Nyssen and its Origenian influence see also McGuckin, “Eschatological Horizons.”

<sup>408</sup> J.A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, 2001), 390. The author rightly underlines that for Gregory Christ must be fully human for humans to benefit from his work; he must be fully divine as well, in order to be able to conquer sin, death, and Satan in his humanity; and he must have two distinct natures but remain fully unified in personhood in order to achieve the deification of humans to the same extent as he became human.

Nazianzen underlined the connection between Christology and soteriology. I would only remark in addition that in this he was inspired by Origen, who had inspired Athanasius as well. And precisely by virtue of this connection, Nazianzen too, like Origen and Nyssen, has apokatastasis depend on Christ. And that the τέλος coincides with human θέωσις is declared by Nazianzen in *Or.* 38,11: “the final stage of the mystery” is described as the fact that humans “will be deified thanks to their adherence to God” and will enjoy the radiance of God.

The deifying effects of incarnation, moreover, constitute a further basis for the doctrine of apokatastasis. Indeed, Nazianzen even foresees the overcoming of the abyss between the blessed and the damned, the χάσμα μέγα of which Gregory of Nyssa also speaks in his interpretation of the Dives and Lazarus parable in his *De anima*. Now, this abyss will be overcome only thanks to Christ-God, the same who has also overcome the abyss between Creator and creatures, by assuming humanity (*Or.* 41,12).

If the extreme, eschatological baptism in fire for those who need it is purifying, and if physical death is conceived by Gregory Nazianzen—as by Origen, Methodius, and Nyssen—as providential in that it avoids an eternity of sin and therefore also an eternity of punishment, and if Nazianzen overtly speaks of universal apokatastasis when God will be “all in all” and all will be in unity, it is evident that Gregory Nazianzen was oriented toward the theory of apokatastasis, which he indeed presented as the only eschatological doctrine that is “worthy of God.” It is also clear that, as I have demonstrated, apokatastasis for Nazianzen, just as for Origen and for Gregory Nyssen, depends on Christ.

### *Evagrius Heir of Origen and the Cappadocians*

There was a time when evil did not exist, and there will come a time when it will no more exist.

(St. Evagrius Ponticus, *Kephalaia Gnostika*, 1,40, Syriac non-expurgated version S<sup>2</sup>)

Evagrius Ponticus (345/6–399),<sup>409</sup> born in Ibora, and son of a presbyter and χωρεπίσκοπος, received a good education in rhetoric, philosophy, and the

<sup>409</sup> The main sources are Palladius, *HL* 38, Socrates, *HE* 4,23, and Sozomen, *HE* 6,30, plus a fifth-century Coptic biography and the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, in Greek and in Rufinus's Latin translation. See below, n. 431, and A.&C. Guillaumont, *Évagre le Pontique*, in

liberal arts. He was “perhaps the best educated in philosophy of all the early monks.”<sup>410</sup> He soon came into contact with Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, who were probably compiling the *Philokalia*, and he is likely to have become acquainted with Origen’s works thanks to them. He was ordained reader by Basil. According to Palladius, who was a disciple of Evagrius and wrote his biography—devoting a chapter of his *Historia Lausiaca* to him, just as Eusebius did with Origen in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*—, he was “the best skilled in producing logical argument against all heresies” (*HL* 38). According again to Palladius, after the death of Basil and of the presbyter who was Evagrius’s “father according to God” and was ordained presbyter in Arkeus by Basil himself, Evagrius went to Constantinople to study with Gregory Nazianzen. Evagrius stayed there in 379–382, at the time of the ecumenical Council of 381, in which he participated as a deacon, ordained by Gregory Nazianzen himself according to Socrates, *HE* 4,23. Palladius, however, who was a personal disciple of Evagrius unlike Socrates, in *HL* 86 (PG 34,1188C) is clear that it was Gregory of Nyssa who ordained him.<sup>411</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, thus, for Palladius was friends with Evagrius and after the death of Basil ordained Evagrius deacon. It is impossible that an error occurred in this text and/or that Palladius meant Nazianzen, since he expressly states that this Gregory was the brother of Basil. The immediately following sentence, that “Gregory the bishop” left Evagrius in Constantinople during the council and handed him to bishop Nectarius, may refer both to Gregory Nyssen and to Gregory Nazianzen, although the immediately previous mention of Nyssen would make the reference to him more natural.<sup>412</sup> Socrates himself, when he states that Gregory went to Egypt with Evagrius (*HE* 4,23)—an otherwise unattested piece of information—may betray a source that referred to Gregory Nyssen. Indeed, we know that after Constantinople, where he was in 381, he

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*Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* IV (Paris, 1961), 1731–1744, Eidem, *Evagrius Ponticus*, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 6 (Stuttgart, 1965), 1088–1107; A. Casiday, *Evagrius Ponticus* (New York, 2006); biographical details also in J. Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic* (Burlington, 2009), 11–26.

<sup>410</sup> C. Stewart, “Monastic Attitudes toward Philosophy and Philosophers,” *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010) 321–327, *praes.* 324.

<sup>411</sup> Μετά δὲ τὴν κοίμησιν τοῦ ἁγίου ἐπισκόπου Βασιλείου προσέχων αὐτοῦ [*sc.* Evagrius] τῇ ἐπιτηδεύσει τοῦ σοφώτατος καὶ ἀπαθέστατος καὶ πάσῃ παιδείᾳ λάμπων ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Νυσσαεὺς ἐπίσκοπος ἀδελφὸς τοῦ ἐν τιμῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων Βασιλείου τοῦ ἐπισκόπου, προχειρίζεται τοῦτον διάκονον. A specific work is devoted to this point: “Evagrius and Gregory: Nazianzen or Nyssen? A Remarkable Issue that Bears on the Cappadocian (and Origenian) Influence on Evagrius,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 53 (2013) 117–137.

<sup>412</sup> Ἐκεῖθεν ἔλθων ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ ἐπίσκοπος ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ συνόδῳ τῇ κατὰ Κωνσταντινουπόλιν καταλιμπάνει αὐτὸν [*sc.* Evagrius] Νεκταρίῳ τῷ μακαρίῳ ἐπισκόπῳ, διαλεκτικώτατον ὄντα κατὰ πασῶν τῶν αἵρέσεων.

went to Jerusalem in 382, and it is quite possible that he travelled further to Egypt with Evagrius, all the more in that he was in Arabia as well exactly in that period (this, moreover, or at least an acquaintance with Evagrius's and Melania's circle, would help to explain the reason why his *De anima et resurrectione* was translated into Coptic in Egypt very soon, possibly even during Gregory's own life<sup>413</sup>).

Evagrius was, at any rate, an assistant of Nazianzen,<sup>414</sup> received from him advanced education,<sup>415</sup> and supported him in his fight against Arians and Pneumatomachians. His letter *On Faith*, which reflects the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians to the point that it was handed down in Greek as Basil's Letter 8, as I have mentioned,<sup>416</sup> probably stems from the years which Evagrius spent with the Cappadocians.<sup>417</sup> Indeed, it seems to rely in particular on Nazianzen's theological Orations 30, 36, and 38. I deem, however, very probable that Evagrius met Nyssen as well, and in any case—what matters even more—that he was very well acquainted with his thought. I shall soon have occasion to briefly point out close significant convergences between Evagrius and Gregory Nyssen; several, of course, can be also explained as common dependences on Origen. But a systematic assessment of the relationship between Evagrius's thought and Nyssen's thought is still badly needed and would be, I expect, important and fruitful, although some remarkable help has been recently offered by an interesting study of Kevin Corrigan.<sup>418</sup>

An affair with a wife of a high functionary had Evagrius depart; he arrived at Jerusalem (382), where he frequented the Origenian, and pro-Nicene,

<sup>413</sup> See Appendix I in my *Gregorio di Nissa Sull'anima*.

<sup>414</sup> Gregory mentions Evagrius in his 381 testament (PG 37,389–396), as “the deacon Evagrius, who has worked very much with me.”

<sup>415</sup> Sozomen in *HE* 6,30 attests that Evagrius “was educated in philosophy and Holy Scripture by Gregory Nazianzen.”

<sup>416</sup> See above in this same chapter, section on Basil.

<sup>417</sup> J. Kalvesmaki, “The *Epistula fidei* of Evagrius of Pontus: An Answer to Constantinople,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20 (2012) 113–139, building upon Robert Melcher's thesis, suggests that this letter was written by Evagrius not from Constantinople around 381 to Christians in Pontus, but to Constantinople from Jerusalem or Egypt in 383 or later.

<sup>418</sup> K. Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory: Mind, Soul and Body in the 4th Century* (Farnham/Burlington, 2009), might seem more a juxtaposition of these two Christian philosophers in respect to some anthropological, ascetic, and mystical themes, than an examination of their interrelationship. With this, however, I do not mean in the least that this is not a valuable work; it is rich and offers many helpful insights. Moreover, I much appreciated Corrigan's attention to the *Kephalaia Gnostica* and the *Letter to Melania*, and his holistic approach to Evagrius's thought, which is also rightly used by Kostantinovsky in her *Evagrius* and, albeit in short, by Casiday in his own *Evagrius*.

Melania the Elder in her double monastery, where Rufinus also was. They had settled there in 380. Letters of Evagrius to both of them are extant. Melania definitely confirmed him in monastic life—whether he had already been a monk earlier or not—, gave him the monastic clothing herself according to Palladius (*HL* 86, PG 34,1194A: παρ' αὐτῆς ἐκείνης μετημφιάσθη), and surely influenced his choice of the Egyptian desert as the place for the rest of his life, first Nitria, cenobitic, and then Kellia, hermitic (383–399/400), where he stuck to severe ascetic practices. He was a disciple of Macarius of Alexandria (†394) and Macarius the Egyptian, the Great, who was converted to asceticism by Anthony, had founded Scetis, and was a supporter of the apokatastasis doctrine.<sup>419</sup> The former seems to be mentioned by Evagrius in *Περὶ λογισμῶν* 33 and 37 and *Antirr.* 4,23 and 58; 8, 26. In *Pract.* 93–94, instead, the reference seems to be to the latter; Sinkewicz, however, refers 94 to Macarius of Alexandria as well.<sup>420</sup> Evagrius may also have visited Didymus, the faithful Origenian, near Alexandria. Evagrius had disciples himself, among whom Palladius and Cassian, and many pilgrim visitors. He refused the episcopate at Thmuis offered to him by Theophilus of

<sup>419</sup> See A. Guillaumont, “Le problème des deux Macaire dans les *Apophthegmata Patrum*,” *Irénikon* 48 (1975) 41–59; M. O’Laughlin, “Closing the Gap between Antony and Evagrius,” in *Origeniana VII*, 345–355; W. Harmless, *Desert Christians* (New York, 2004); on Macarius the Egyptian T. Satoshi, *Vie de saint Macaire l’Egyptien* (Piscataway, 2012) with edition and translation of the Coptic and Syriac *Vitae*. Ps. Macarius deserves a mention in the present investigation. In the early sixth century (but some place him in the late fourth), this ascetic author, well steeped in the Greek and Syriac traditions, composed fifty spiritual homilies and a Great Letter. See C. Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart. The Messalian Controversy* (Oxford, 1991); I quote the translations from G. Maloney, *Ps. Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (New York, 1992). In his homilies he insists on Christ’s action of extirpating evil. This is particularly clear from Homily 28(3), which takes over a georgic imagery (on which see H. Hunt, “Working the Earth of the Heart: Images of Cultivation and Harvest in Macarius and Ephrem,” *Studia Patristica* 52 [2012] 149–160) applied to spiritual realities that goes back to Philo’s *De agri cultura*: “Christ the King, the heavenly and true cultivator, when he came to humanity made barren by evil, put on the body and carried the cross as his tool, and worked the barren soul and removed from it the thorns and thistles of evil spirits and pulled up the weeds of sin and burnt up with fire every weed of its sins. And in this way he cultivated it with the wood of the cross and planted in it the most beautiful Paradise (garden) of the Spirit.” The very idea that Christ-God first destroys evil in the soul and then plants in it God’s Paradise comes, I suspect, from Origen’s *Homilies of Jeremiah*, where it is expressed in the very same terms (see my “Origen’s Homilies on Jeremiah”). Ps. Macarius is likely to have embraced the apokatastasis doctrine, all the more in that his writings reveal close similarities with Nyssen and Evagrius. Either Gregory based his *De instituto Christiano* on Macarius’s *Great Letter* or Ps. Macarius drew on Gregory. It must be borne in mind that the paternity of *De instituto Christiano* is unsure.

<sup>420</sup> Evagrius of Pontus, *The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, XIX.

Alexandria,<sup>421</sup> and died in 399 just before Theophilus's Paschal letter against anthropomorphism, which triggered the disorders that had this bishop dramatically change his mind—or better his politics—and persecute Evagrius's fellow-monks in Nitria and Kellia, especially chasing the Origenian Tall Brothers, Evagrius's friends.

He was an Origenian, and like Origen he was criticised because he was too learned and read too much,<sup>422</sup> besides being blamed by monk Heron for his teaching already during his life (Palladius *HL* 26). Origen's thought, together with—and partially through—that of the Cappadocians,<sup>423</sup> and Neoplatonism, undoubtedly represented his main source of inspiration. Research has certainly been devoted to Origen's influence on Evagrius,<sup>424</sup> but what has been often missed by scholarship is that Evagrius was an *Origenian* more than an *Origenist* proper. With this I mean that he remained faithful to Origen's true thought, like Gregory of Nyssa. The unfortunate and inexact interpretation of his thought in the light of later Origenism, as though Evagrius's ideas—and Origen's, and Didymus's—were identifiable with those of the Origenists condemned in the day of Justinian, also explains

<sup>421</sup> Evagrius preferred the spiritual authority coming from inspiration, prayer, teaching, and miracles, to that which comes from hierarchy: see C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley, 2005), Ch. 3; for the root of this notion in Origen see E. dal Covolo, "Sacerdozio dei fedeli, gerarchia della santità e gerarchia ministeriale in alcune omelie di Origene," in *Origeniana VIII*, 605–612; I. Ramelli, "Theosebia," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26,2 (2010) 79–102.

<sup>422</sup> *Apophth. Patr.* A 233 (Evagrius 7); A 224 (Euprepios 7, but in fact Evagrius); A43 (Arsenius 5).

<sup>423</sup> See e.g. N. Gendle, "Cappadocian Elements in the Mystical Theology of Evagrius," *Studia Patristica XVI/2* (Berlin, 1985), 373–384.

<sup>424</sup> E.g. H. Crouzel, "Recherches sur Origène et son influence," *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 62 (1961) 3–15; 105–113; F. Refoulé, "La christologie d'Évagre et l'Origénisme," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 27 (1961), 221–266; Idem, "Évagre fut-il Origéniste?," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 47 (1963) 398–402; Idem, "La mystique d'Évagre et l'Origénisme," *Vie Spirituelle Suppl.* 66 (1963) 453–463; F.X. Murphy, "Evagrius Ponticus and Origenism," in *Origeniana tertia*, eds. R. Hanson–H. Crouzel (Rome, 1985), 253–269; F. Kline, "The Christology of Evagrius and the Parent System of Origen," *Cistercian Studies* 20 (1985), 155–183; M. O'Laughlin, "Elements of Fourth-Century Origenism," in *Origen of Alexandria*, eds. Ch. Kannengiesser–W.L. Petersen (Notre Dame, IN, 1988), 357–373; Idem, "New Questions Concerning the Origenism of Evagrius," in *Origeniana V*, ed. R.J. Daly (Leuven, 1992), 528–535; Ch. Kannengiesser, "Antony, Athanasius, Evagrius: The Egyptian Fate of Origenism," *Coptic Church Review* 16 (1995) 3–8; L. Thunberg–A.M. Allchin, *Microcosm and Mediator: the Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Chicago, 1995<sup>2</sup>), with reflections on the relationships between Origen, Evagrius, and Maximus; M. Pesthy, "Logismoï origénien–logismoï évagriens, Origène et la tradition alexandrine vus par Photius," in *Origeniana VIII*, 1017–1022.

the loss of many of his works in Greek, even though Evagrius, like Didymus, was perfectly orthodox in Trinitarian matters, as is demonstrated by his Letter *On Faith*. This closely follows the Cappadocians' Trinitarian theology and its formula, μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις, which in turn is entirely based on Origen.<sup>425</sup> Indeed, Evagrius regarded as a heretic anyone who did not believe in the consubstantiality of the Persons of the Trinity (*Exh. ad mon.* 45). Evagrius's Trinitarian orthodoxy is not at odds with the Christology<sup>426</sup> that is found in his *Kephalaia Gnostica* or even in his *Letter to Melania*. Palladius's biography of Evagrius, indeed, reports an epigram that exalts Evagrius's Trinitarian orthodoxy, in respect to both the Son and the Spirit. Guillaumont's claim that the doctrine condemned in the fifth to eighth ecumenical councils was not that of Origen, but that of Evagrius,<sup>427</sup> needs to be refined with a correction that is crucial to the understanding of Evagrius himself: in fact, the doctrines condemned under Justinian and later were neither those of Origen nor even those of Evagrius proper, but rather of later Origenists who distorted and radicalised Evagrius's thought.<sup>428</sup>

As a result of such misunderstandings, Evagrius's works often survive only in translations, into Syriac, or Armenian,<sup>429</sup> or Latin, or even other languages. Sometimes, his works were preserved in anthologies and ascribed to other authors whose orthodoxy was found less suspect, such as Basil and Nilus of Ancyra; "chapters" were compiled by his disciples.<sup>430</sup> Evagrius's

<sup>425</sup> Argument in my "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism." On Evagrius's Letter *On Faith* see P. Bettolo, ed., *L'Epistula fidei di Evagrio Pontico: temi, contesti, sviluppi* (Rome, 2000), all the book and here esp. P. Géhin, "La place de la *Lettre sur la foi* dans l'oeuvre d'Évagre," 25–58.

<sup>426</sup> On which see Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius*, 109–152.

<sup>427</sup> See A. Guillaumont, "Évagre et les anathématismes anti-origénistes de 553," *Studia Patristica III* (Berlin, 1961) 219–226, and Idem, *Les Kephalaia Gnostica d'Évagre*.

<sup>428</sup> I. Perczel, "Note sur la pensée systématique d'Évagre le Pontique," in *Origene e l'Alessandrino cappadocia*, ed. M. Girardi–M. Marin (Bari, 2002), 277–297. The comparison between Evagrius's obscure and concise language and the coherent and expanded system of the anti-Origenian sources seems to confirm Perczel's thesis. See further my own argument below, Ch. 4, in the section devoted to Justinian and the Origenists.

<sup>429</sup> See A. Guillaumont, "Le rôle des versions orientales dans la récupération de l'oeuvre d'Évagre," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions* (Paris, 1985), 64–74; Idem, "Les versions syriaques de l'oeuvre d'Évagre," *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 221 (1983) 35–41; K. Samir, "Évagre le Pontique dans la tradition arabo-copte," in *Actes du IV<sup>e</sup> Congrès Copte*, II (Louvain, 1992), 123–153.

<sup>430</sup> P. Géhin, *Chapitres des disciples d'Évagre*, Sources Chrétiennes 514 (Paris, 2007), is the first edition of the over two hundred chapters (κεφάλαια) on the πρακτική and the γνωστική collected by some disciple(s), as it seems, at the beginning of the fifth century. This collection seems to reflect Evagrius's most mature thought and influenced Maximus the Confessor's *Chapters on Love*.

influence, however, was in fact enormous, not only on successive radical Origenists, but also on thinkers such as Ps. Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, John Climacus, Isaac of Nineveh, etc.<sup>431</sup> Even Barhebraeus, much later (1226–1286)—a Syriac Orthodox bishop who wrote in Syriac and Arabic on theology, philosophy, history, science, and else, and valued Origen's *Hexapla*—defined Evagrius “the greatest of the gnostics.”<sup>432</sup> His influence, not only on Greek and Syriac Christianity, but also on Latin Christianity, is impressive; the latter was enabled especially by the Latin texts (or translations) of Cassian<sup>433</sup> and to Rufinus's translations of Evagrius's works (it is also probable that Melania and Rufinus, by means of their *scriptorium* and their relations, contributed to the spread of Evagrius's Greek works). Others, too, translated them into Latin, as is suggested by the existence of two Latin versions of his *Ad virginem*. Like Rufinus and Melania, Jerome also was an admirer of Evagrius; in Letter 4,2 he called him “reverend presbyter,” but after his sudden rejection of Origen,<sup>434</sup> he began to be hostile to Evagrius as well.

Thus, for instance, while the Greek text of the *Kephalaia Practica* is preserved,<sup>435</sup> just as those of several other works, mostly collections of

<sup>431</sup> On Cassian see below the section I devote to him and C. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford, 1998), who underlines Evagrius's influence; still important, albeit partially outdated, is S. Marsili, “Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico, Dottrina sulla Carità e Contemplazione” *Scriptorium* 5 (1951) 195–213. But now Tzamalikos's rereading of the figure of Cassian should be taken into account (see below, Ch. 4, section on Cassian). As for Evagrius's influence on Maximus, see for instance I. Dalmais, *L'héritage évagrien dans la synthèse de Saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Texte und Untersuchungen 93 (1966) 356–362; A. Louth–J. Raitt, *Wisdom of the Byzantine Church: Evagrios of Pontos and Maximos the Confessor* (Columbia, Mo., 1998). Some sources on Evagrius's life: Nazianzen in his will (see R. Van Dam, “Self-Representation in the Will of Gregory of Nazianzus,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 46 [1995] 118–148); the anonymous, late-fourth-century *Historia Monachorum*, 20,15; Palladius *Hist. Laus.* 38 (ca. 420); an anonymous fifth-century Coptic biography; Gennadius *De Vir. Ill.* 6,11,17; Jerome *Ep.* 133,2–3 (415 CE), *Dial. c. Pelag.* praef. (ca. 417), *Comm. Jer.* IV pref. (ca. 419). See T. Vivian, “Coptica Palladiana II: The Life of Evagrius (*Lausiaca History* 38),” *Coptic Church Review* 21 (2000) 8–23; Socrates *HE* 3,7; 4,23; 7,17; Sozomen *HE* 6,30; 8,6.

<sup>432</sup> More generally on Barhebraeus's knowledge and use of the Fathers see at least D. Taylor, “L'importance des Pères de l'Église dans l'oeuvre spéculative de Barhebraeus,” *Parole de l'Orient* 33 (2008) 63–85.

<sup>433</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on Cassian.

<sup>434</sup> See below in this same chapter the section on Jerome.

<sup>435</sup> Λόγος Πρακτικός, CPG 2430. An introduction to ascetic life, in 100 chapters, it is the first part of a trilogy also composed by the Γνωστικός and the Κεφάλαια Γνωστικά (KG). It has been handed down in Greek, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic, Georgian, and Arabic. The 50-chapter Γνωστικός, CPG 2431, is preserved in Greek fragmentarily but survives in full in Syriac, in various recensions, and Armenian.



sentences,<sup>436</sup> such as those *Ad monachos* and *Ad virginem*,<sup>437</sup> and many *sententiae* and *capita*, and exegetical works,<sup>438</sup> only scanty Greek fragments survive from the more speculative *Kephalaia Gnostica* (Γνωστικά Κεφάλαια or ἑξακόσια προγνωστικά προβλήματα, in six books of ninety chapters each; CPG 2432). The whole work is only extant in Oriental versions, in Armenian, Arabic, and above all Syriac. The Syriac version discovered by Guillaumont and called S<sup>2</sup>, unlike the other extant Syriac version (S<sup>1</sup>) and unlike the other versions in general, is not expurgated, in particular it is not freed from what was subsequently perceived as dangerously Origenistic.<sup>439</sup>

Evagrius's *Antirrheticus* (CPG 2434) too, however, is lost in Greek, even though it is not a product of bold metaphysical, protological, or eschatological speculations, but rather a collection of Biblical verses aimed at the destruction of passions. An attempt has been made to reconstruct the

<sup>436</sup> On Evagrius's Greek tradition see J. Muyldermans, *À travers la tradition manuscrite d'Évagre* (Louvain, 1932); Évagre le Pontique, *Sur les pensées*, éd., intr., tr., notes par P. Géhin–C. Guillaumont–A. Guillaumont, *Sources Chrétiennes* 438 (Paris, 1998); Évagre le Pontique, *Traité pratique, ou Le moine*, I, intr., éd., tr., comm. par A. et C. Guillaumont, I–II, *Sources Chrétiennes* 170–171 (Paris, 1971); J.E. Bamberger, *Praktikos. Über das Gebet* (Münsterschwarzach, 1986).

<sup>437</sup> Πρὸς τοὺς ἐν κοινοβίοις ἢ συνοδαίαις μοναχοὺς, CPG 2435. In 137 chapters on monastic life, handed down in Greek, in a double recension, in Latin, also in a double recension, plus Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, and Georgian. This work is often associated with the Παράνεσις πρὸς παρθένον, CPG 2436, 56 thoughts handed down in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Armenian.

<sup>438</sup> The exegetical works that are extant only in Syriac (such as *De cherubim* and *De seraphim*) or in Coptic or Arabic are very few. Extant in Greek are, for instance, the following: Σχόλια εἰς τοὺς Ψαλμοὺς (CPG 2455), stemming from Catenae or Scriptural commentaries in which they are—tellingly!—attributed to Origen or Athanasius, or from unpublished manuscripts all deriving from an Evagriian commentary on the Psalms now lost; see also, e.g., CPG 2458,2; CPG 2458,3; CPG 2458,4; CPG 2458,5.

<sup>439</sup> A. Guillaumont, “Le texte véritable des *Gnostica* d'Évagre le Pontique,” *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 142 (1952) 156–205, first contended that the original text is S<sup>2</sup>, on which I based my new edition, translation, and commentary: *Evagrius' Chapters on Knowledge* (Leiden–Atlanta, forthcoming). The first critical edition has been *Les six siècles des 'Kephalaia gnostica' d'Évagre*, édition critique de la version syriaque commune et édition d'une nouvelle version syriaque, intégrale, avec une double traduction française par A. Guillaumont, PO 28 (Paris, 1958–1959); a new French translation and edition, after Guillaumont's, is being prepared by Paul Géhin, whom I thank for sharing this piece of news; J.W. Watt, “The Syriac Adapter of Evagrius's Centuries,” in *Studia Patristica XVII*, 3, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Oxford, 1982), 1388–1395; D. Bundy, “The Philosophical Structures of Origenism. The Case of the Expurgated Syriac Version S<sup>1</sup> of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* of Evagrius,” in *Origeniana V*, ed. R.J. Daly (Leuven, 1992), 577–584. On their literary form see E. von Ivánka, “ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΑ: eine byzantinische Literaturform und ihre antiken Wurzeln,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 47 (1954) 285–291 and A. Méhat, *Étude sur les Stromates de Clément d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1966), 119–124. W. Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus* (Berlin, 1912), offered a Greek retroversion of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, with Babai's commentary (422–471). See also I. Hausherr, *Les versions syriaque et arménienne d'Évagre* (Rome, 1931); *Evagriana Syriaca*, éd. et tr. par J. Muyldermans (Louvain, 1952).

original Greek, but the work is preserved only in Syriac, Armenian, and Georgian, plus Sogdian fragments in a double recension. The same is the case also with Evagrius's letters. While the original Greek text is extant—even in three recensions—of at least sixty-two epistles of spiritual advice to different addressees such as Rufinus, Melania the Elder, John of Jerusalem, or Gregory Nazianzen (CPG 2437), and the Greek of the Letter *On Faith*, or *Dogmatic Letter*, is likewise extant along with the Syriac translation—also thanks to the previous attribution of this letter to Basil<sup>440</sup>—, the original is lost in the case of the so-called *Letter to Melania* or *Great Letter* (CPG 2438), which is the most extensive among Evagrius's letters and deals with apokatastasis, the Trinity, and spiritual knowledge. This letter is only extant in an Armenian and a double Syriac recension. I shall return to this fundamental document very soon.

Many works by Evagrius, indeed—just as some by Gregory Nyssen, for instance his *De anima et resurrectione*<sup>441</sup>— were translated into Coptic and, probably even before the sixth century, into Syriac.

Evagrius's works concern both theology/metaphysics and spiritual ascent and ascetic practice;<sup>442</sup> these aspects are closely related in Evagrius and

<sup>440</sup> CPG 2439. It is, as it seems, the most ancient extant letter of Evagrius; it was ascribed to him only in 1923 by Bousset and Melcher.

<sup>441</sup> I have used the very early Coptic version of this work to improve its Greek edition in my own edition, *Gregorio di Nissa Sull'anima e la resurrezione* (Milan, 2007).

<sup>442</sup> A complete English translation of Evagrius's ascetic *corpus* is found in R.E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford, 2003). On Evagrius "father of the desert" see also, e.g., É. Junod, *Les sages du désert: Antoine, Pachôme, Évangre, Syméon* (Genève, 1991); *Quatre ermites égyptiens, d'après les fragments coptes de l'Histoire Lausiaque*, prés. par G. Bunge, tr. par A. de Vogüé (Bégrolles-en-Mauges, 1994); I. Hausherr, "Le traité de l'oraison d'Évangre le Pontique (ps. Nil)," *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 15 (1934) 34–118; A. Guillaumont, "Le problème de la prière continue dans le monachisme ancien," in *L'Experience de la prière dans les grandes religions* (Louvain-La-Neuve, 1980), 285–294; Idem, *Études sur la spiritualité de l'Orient chrétien* (Bégrolles en Mauges, 1996), 143–150; G. Bunge, "Priez sans cesse. Aux origines de la prière hésychaste," *Studia Monastica* 30 (1988) 7–16; S. Elm, "The *Sententiae ad virginem* by Evagrius Ponticus and the Problem of Early Monastic Rules," *Augustinianum* 30 (1990) 393–404, who considers this text to be a monastic rule rather than a letter to a virgin. See also C. Stewart, "Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9,2 (2001) 173–204; L. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius* (Oxford, 2004); Fr. Theophanes (Constantine), *The Evagrian Ascetical System*, vol. 2 of *The Psychological Basis of Mental Prayer in the Heart* (Mount Athos, 2006). Also: G. Bunge, *Geistliche Vaterschaft: christliche Gnosis bei Evagrius* (Regensburg, 1988); R.D. Young, "Evagrius the Iconographer: Monastic Pedagogy in the *Gnostikos*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001) 53–71; J. Driscoll, *The Ad monachos of Evagrius Ponticus* (Rome, 1991); Idem, "Gentleness in the *Ad monachos* of Evagrius," *Studia Monastica* 22 (1990) 295–321; Id., "A Key for Reading the *Ad monachos* of Evagrius," *Augustinianum* 30 (1990) 361–392; C. Göbel, "Philosophie des Mönchseins," *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 65 (2002) 3–23.

cannot exist independently on one another. Evagrius's thought must be approached in its entirety. Therefore, it is particularly regrettable that Evagrius was, so to say, split into two; while his ascetic works were deemed "good," his metaphysical speculations—especially those found in his *Kephalaia Gnostica* and *Letter to Melania*—were deemed "bad" and "dangerous." Theorisations of apokatastasis are especially found in the latter group, and precisely in Evagrius's *Letter to Melania* and *Kephalaia Gnostica*, in which Evagrius shows that his conception of the *telos*, just like those of Origen and Gregory Nyssen, is closely related to the rest of his thought, which is entirely oriented toward the *telos* itself. For the *telos* is the perfect realisation of God's plan for rational creatures.

The addressee of the *Letter to Melania* in one of the two Syriac manuscripts in which it is preserved,<sup>443</sup> just as in other letters by Evagrius extant in Armenian, is Melania the Elder. Some scholars do not accept the identification of the addressee with Melania, especially because in the Syriac text Evagrius addresses her thrice calling her ܡܠܝܬܐ, "my lord." Therefore, some consider Rufinus to be a more probable addressee (Bunge<sup>444</sup>). Palladius in *HL* 86 (PG 34,1193D) calls Melania ἡ μακαρία Μελάνιον, using this neutral form as a diminutive. Syriac translators may have understood it as a masculine, or Evagrius himself may have used it, all the more if he, like his disciple Palladius, used to call her Μελάνιον. Rufinus, like Melania and Evagrius, was a great admirer of Origen, and indeed this letter is understandable only against the backdrop of Origen's thought. Others scholars, however, like Parmentier, consider the address in the masculine form for a woman to be understandable in a "gnostic" context, as a kind of honorific address.<sup>445</sup> Whomever Evagrius was addressing—and I would not rule out Melania herself altogether—, this was an Origenian.

<sup>443</sup> See Parmentier, *Evagrius' Letter to Melania*, 1–28; Clark, *Controversy*, 72–75.

<sup>444</sup> G. Bunge, *Evagrius Pontikos, Briefe aus der Wüste* (Trier, 1986), 194; on 303–328 he also offers a translation of the *Letter to Melania*; G. Vitestam, *Seconde partie du traité, qui passe sous le nom de La grande lettre d'Évagre le Pontique à Mélanie l'ancienne*, d'après le manuscrit du British Museum Add. 17192 (Lund, 1964), 4–5 also thought that the addressee of the letter was originally a man. Casiday, *Evagrius*, 64 is on the same line. Vitestam offers the edition of the Syriac for §§ 17, 24–25, 33–68. The edition of §§ 1–32 is provided by Frankenberg, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 610–619.

<sup>445</sup> M. Parmentier, "Evagrius of Pontus' Letter to Melania," *Bijdragen* 46 (1985) 2–38, esp. 5–6. Reprinted in *Forms of Devotion, Conversion, Worship, Spirituality, and Asceticism*, ed. E. Ferguson (New York, 1999). Parmentier also includes an English version of the letter. The title *Letter to Melania* is kept by P. Bettolo, *Evagrio Pontico. Lo scrigno della sapienza: Lettera a Melania* (Magnano, Biella, 1997) too.

This letter has important points of contact with the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, but it is a little less concise in its expression, thus providing precious help to understand some points in the other, more cryptic work, although Evagrius does not express himself completely freely in this letter, in that he does not want to commit some thoughts to paper, given that other people, apart from the addressee, might read them. In part he is using a literary *topos*, but he certainly also means that he has left something out. At the very beginning Evagrius says that friends put down in letters ideas that are not for anyone and can be revealed only to those who have an affinity of thoughts (1). Afterwards, Evagrius repeats that in this letter he is writing things that he cannot express entirely: "I cannot commit these things to paper and ink, because of those who might intercept this letter; moreover, these important topics are too dangerous to be written down on paper. This is why I cannot say everything" (17). In 18, again, he repeats that there are things that ink and paper cannot relate. These are probably not to be identified with the eventual apokatastasis, of which Evagrius does speak, but with how the Spirit and the Son communicate with the intellect, and with the reasons why the intelligible creation was joined to the sense-perceptible creation: it was joined to it "for reasons that it is impossible to explain here," Evagrius says (see below). Moreover, it is of course impossible to speak of the divine mysteries. With some, the Spirit and the Son communicate directly—although Evagrius does *not* explain how—, whereas with others, less advanced, they communicate indirectly, by means of God's creation, meaning the sense-perceptible creation, what Evagrius calls the "secondary creation" (this terminology repeatedly appears in his *Kephalaia Gnostica*) and is the object of "natural contemplation" (φυσικὴ θεωρία). This secondary creation is not evil; on this, Origen had already insisted against "Gnostics" and Marcionites. Far from being evil, it is providential, and was wanted by God as a mediation, for the sake of those who are far from God in that "they have placed a separation between themselves and their Creator because of their evil deeds." God instituted this mediation by means of his Wisdom and Power, that is to say, the Son and the Spirit. For Evagrius, "the whole ministry of the Son and the Spirit is exercised through creation, *for the sake of those who are far from God*" (5). This is perfectly in line with Gregory of Nyssa's and the Cappadocians' moderate apophaticism and the role that, in their view, God's operations play in the acquisition of the knowledge of God.<sup>446</sup>

<sup>446</sup> See my "Silenzio apofatico in Gregorio di Nissa," and Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius*, 47–76.

It is worth noticing that in this letter the Son is called, literally, “the hand of God” and the Spirit “the finger of God.” The same is the case in Evagrius’s Letter *On Faith*, in which Christ is called “the right hand of God” and the Spirit “the finger of God.”<sup>447</sup> The same double metaphor is found in Didymus, *De Spir. S.* PG 39,1051A, 1076C, and 1077AB (on the Son as hand of God), and in 1051BC (on the Spirit as finger of God), and in Ambrose, *De Spir. S.* 3,3 (both metaphors). One might suspect that Evagrius, Didymus, and Ambrose drew their double image from Origen. Evagrius’s scarce speaking of the Spirit in his ascetic works is due to its being replaced by angels,<sup>448</sup> and Evagrius’s scheme of assistance by angels followed by assistance by Christ is a direct derivation from Origen (e.g. *Comm. in Matth.* 13,26).<sup>449</sup> Only rational creatures who are close to God are helped directly by the Logos and the Spirit, without the mediation of creation: “Just as the intellect operates in the body by the mediation of the soul, likewise the Father, too, by the mediation of his own soul [*sc.* the Son and the Spirit], operates in his own body, which is the human intellect” (15). Indeed, human intellects know thanks to the Logos and the Spirit, who make everything known to them (19); they do not become aware of their own nature but through the Logos and the Spirit, who are their souls (21). In turn, human intellects are the bodies of the Son and the Spirit (*ibid.*). We are the intelligible creation and are now found joined to this visible creation, “for reasons that it is impossible to explain here.”

In 22–30 Evagrius expounds some reflections on apokatastasis, which he, like Origen, strongly characterises as a *ἑνωσις*, a unification of the three components of humans and rational creatures with God:

And there will be a time when *the body, the soul, and the intellect will cease to be separate* from one another, with their names and their plurality, since *the body and the soul will be elevated to the rank of intellects*; this conclusion can be drawn from the words, “That they may be one in us, just as you and I are One” [John 17:22]. Thus there will be a time when *the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and their rational creation, which constitutes their body, will cease to be separate, with their names and their plurality*. And this conclusion can be drawn from the words, “God will be all in all” [1 Cor 15:28]. (*Ep. ad Mel.* 22)

Like Origen, Evagrius confirms every argumentative passage by means of a scriptural quotation. Both citations here were among the favourite quota-

<sup>447</sup> PG 32,265AB.

<sup>448</sup> So J. Scully, “Angelic Pneumatology in the Egyptian Desert,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19 (2011) 287–305, *praes.* 295.

<sup>449</sup> See J.W. Trigg, “Christ and the Angelic Hierarchy in Origen’s Theology,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991) 35–51.

tions of Origen in reference to the *telos*: John 17:22 for the final ἔνωσις, and 1 Cor 15:28 for both ἔνωσις and apokatastasis. The eventual elevation of bodies and souls to the order of intellects is also declared by Evagrius in *KG* 2,17; 3,66.68; 3,15; and 1,65. I shall return to these passages, which are among the most prominent *loci* concerning apokatastasis in the *Kephalaia Gnostica*. Evagrius, indeed, follows both the anthropological tripartition into body, soul, and intellect/spirit, and the Platonic tripartition of the soul into θυμός, ἐπιθυμία, and νοῦς/λογικόν, the last of which is assigned indisputable excellence.<sup>450</sup> This tripartition is evident in *Kephalaia Practica* 89: "The soul of rational beings is tripartite into *rational* [...] *appetitive* [...] and *irascible*." The same tripartition also emerges in a number of passages from Evagrius's *Kephalaia Gnostica* (I give my translation from my forthcoming edition): "The *irascible* faculty, when it is troubled, blinds the seer; the *appetitive* faculty, when bestially moved, hides the visible objects" (5,27); "The one whose *intellect* is with the Lord all the time, and whose *irascible* part is full of humility thanks to its remembering God, and whose *appetitive* part is entirely oriented toward the Lord, well, it is proper to such a person not to fear his/her enemies, those which circulate outside our mortal bodies" (4,73); "Knowledge cures the *intellect*, whereas love cures the *irascible* faculty (of the soul), and chastity the *appetitive* part" (3,35); "Knowledge and ignorance are joined to the *intellect*, the *appetitive* part (of the soul) is susceptible of chastity and lust, and the *irascible* part usually experiences love and hatred" (1,84); "The *intellect* is the seer of the Holy Trinity" (3,30); "The *intellect* is the most valuable of all the *faculties* of the soul" (6,51); "The bare *intellect* is that which, by means of the contemplation that regards it, is joined to the knowledge of the Trinity. In the beginning the *intellect* had God, who is incorruptible, as teacher of immaterial intellections. Now, however, it has received corruptible sense-perception as teacher of material intellections" (3,6.55). Like Origen, Evagrius also considers the soul to be a fallen intellect. Origen notoriously described the soul (ψυχή) as an intellect that has undergone a cooling up or ψύξις; Evagrius, in *KG* 3,28, analogously depicts the soul as an intellect

<sup>450</sup> See K. Ware–A. Dempf, "Nous and Noesis in Plato, Aristotle and Evagrius of Pontus: Evagrius Pontikos als Metaphysiker und Mystiker," *Diotima* 13 (1985) 158–163; G. Bunge, "Nach dem Intellekt Leben': zum sog. 'Intellektualismus' der evagrianischen Spiritualität," in *Simandron, der Wachklopfer. Gedenkschrift Gamber*, ed. W. Nyssen (Köln, 1989); Idem, "Origenismus-Gnostizismus. Zum geistesgeschichtlichen Standort des Evagrius Pontikos," *Vigiliae Christianae* 40 (1986) 24–54; D. Bertrand, "L'implication du Nous dans la prière chez Origène et Évagre le Pontique," in *Origeniana VII*, 365–374; Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, Ch. 5 on the tripartite soul in Evagrius. This tripartition is testified to for instance at *Praktikos* 38; 78; 89.

that, because of carelessness, has fallen from Unity and, due to its lack of vigilance, has descended to the order of the *praktikē* (that is, from contemplation to practical life, ethics, which in Evagrius coincides with asceticism and the search for virtue and liberation from passions<sup>451</sup>), whereas the intellect should proceed along its own contemplative path toward the angels; if, on the contrary, it proceeds on the path of the soul, which should rather be its instrument, it risks ending up among demons (*KG* 2,48). On this idea, and on the Platonic tripartition of the soul, Evagrius's whole ethics and theory of spiritual ascent is based.<sup>452</sup> His very theory of vices, the λογισμοί that lead to the death of the soul, is heavily dependent on Origen.<sup>453</sup>

The impression that it is possible to gain from the above-quoted passage, *Ep. ad Mel.* 22, that of an obliteration of the Persons of the Trinity, or a confusion between the Creator and creatures, leading to a pantheism of the kind of Bar Sudhaili (whom I shall treat below),<sup>454</sup> is dispelled by the continua-

<sup>451</sup> The same term, *πρακτική*, with related terms such as *πρακτικός*, is attested in "pagan" Neoplatonism in the sense of "ethics" (see Olympiodorus *Proll.* 8). Evagrius offers the following definition in *Praktikos* 78: "*πρακτική* is the spiritual method for purifying the part of the soul subject to passions." The goal of *praktikē* is *apatheia*. On this ideal in Evagrius see at least M. Rasmussen, "Like a Rock or Like God? The Concept of *Apatheia* in the Monastic Theology of Evagrius," *Studia Theologica: Nordic Journal of Theology* 59 (2005) 147–162. *Praktikē* is deemed by Evagrius the first component of the Christian doctrine: "Christianity is the doctrine of Jesus Christ our Saviour, consisting in *πρακτική*, *φυσική*, and *θεολογική*" (*Praktikos* 1).

<sup>452</sup> See R. Sorabji, "Stoic First Movements in Christianity," in *Stoicism: Traditions and Transformations*, ed. S.K. Strange–J. Zupko (Cambridge, 2004), 95–107; Idem, *Emotions and Peace of Mind* (Oxford, 2000), with the review by I. Ramelli in *Aevum* 77 (2003) 217–221; A. Le Bouluec, "Recherches sur la postérité littéraire et doctrinale de Clément d'Alexandrie," *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses* 100 (1991/2), 343–346. See some of the relevant works in CPG 2451, CPG 2448, and CPG 2450.

<sup>453</sup> See I. Hausherr, "L'origine de la théorie orientale des huit péchés capitaux," *Orientalia Christiana* 30 (1933) 164–175.

<sup>454</sup> I agree with Augustine Casiday as well that the *Letter to Melania* cannot be considered to express an "isochristic" thought such as that which was later condemned under Justinian (see below, Ch. 4, section on Justinian): A. Casiday, "Universal Restoration in Evagrius Ponticus' 'Great Letter,'" *Studia Patristica* 47 (2010) 223–228. He rightly observes that when Evagrius in this letter (22) says that the body and the soul will be raised to the order of the intellect "there is no compelling reason to think that this elevation destroys rather than, say, consummates or fulfills the body and the soul" (228). I think that a comparison with the *Kephalaia Gnostica* confirms, rather than disproves, this supposition. In this way, Casiday opposes Guillaumont, *Les Kephalaia Gnostica*, 156: "La christologie d'Évagre est donc absolument identique à celle des moins isochristes et à celle qui forme la partie essentielle de l'origénisme résumé dans les quinze anathématismes de 553. Il y a non seulement identité doctrinale, mais, sur certains points, comme nous l'avons vu, des rencontres littéraires." The only point I cannot agree with is that "Origen taught cycles of falling and reconciliation [with reference to Jerome *Ep.* 124], which is precluded by Evagrius' reference to the endless and inseparable unity of God" (224). Origen, like Evagrius, thought that there would be a final

tion of Evagrius's letter, in which it is declared that the three hypostases of the Trinity will remain in the *telos* and that the three components of rational creatures will be absorbed in each of them:

But when it is declared that the names and plurality of rational creatures and their Creator will pass away, it does *not at all mean that the hypostases and the names of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit will be obliterated*. The nature of the intellect will be joined to the substance of the Father, since it constitutes his body [2 Pet 1:4]. Similarly, the names "soul" and "body" will be subsumed under the hypostases of the Son and the Spirit. And the one and the same nature and three Persons of God, and of God's image, will remain eternally, as it was before the Inhumanation, and will be after the Inhumanation, thanks to the *concord of wills*. Thus, body, soul, and mind are (now) separate in number due to the *differentiation of wills*. But when the names and plurality that have attached to the intellect due to this movement (of will)<sup>455</sup> have passed away, then the multiple names by which God is called will pass away as well. [...] It is not the case that those distinctions [*sc.* God's *epinoiai*] are inexistent, but those who needed them will no more exist. But *the names and hypostases of the Son and the Spirit will never disappear*, since they have no beginning and no end. As they have not received them [*sc.* their names and hypostases] from an unstable cause, they will never disappear, but while their cause continues to exist, they too continue to exist. They are *different from rational creatures*, whose cause is the Father as well; but these derive from him by grace, whereas the Son and the Spirit derive from the nature of his essence.

(*Ep. ad Mel.* 23–25)

Against possible pantheistic interpretations of the final *ἔνωσις*, the point concerning the unanimity of the wills is very important and reveals that for Evagrius, just as for Origen, the initial and the final unity are not a confusion of God and creatures, but are both a union *of wills*. The Persons of the Trinity have the same will, and all rational creatures will have the same will, in that everyone's will shall be oriented to the Good, that is, God. Just like Origen, indeed, Evagrius also explains the present differentiation of the intellectual creatures with the differentiation of their wills that occurred with the fall. This is the "movement" (*sc.* of will) in the terminology of both Origen and Evagrius here. In the eventual apokatastasis, that differentiation will disappear, and with it all the divine *epinoiai*, which exist only for the sake of the salvific economy (an idea that Evagrius drew from Origen, who

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unity with God, after which no more falls would be possible. Jerome's letter, written after his U-turn against Origen, is much less trustworthy than Origen's own Commentary on Romans and many other passages, some of which also preserved in Greek.

<sup>455</sup> This meaning of *κίνησις* is typical of Origen and his tradition, on which Evagrius relies. It is not the case that (as is stated by J. Suzuki, "The Evagrian Concept of *Apatheia* and its Origenism," in *Origeniana IX*, 605–611, *praes.* 208) it is "unique" to Evagrius.



expressed it especially in *Princ.* 4,4,1, but was also present in Gregory of Nyssa, who, like Evagrius, speaks more of *epinoiai* of God in general than of *epinoiai* of Christ alone<sup>456</sup>). The difference between the Son and the Spirit and the creatures is made very clear by Evagrius: the Son and the Spirit stem from the Father by nature and share the Father's essence, while rational creatures derive from God by grace and have a different essence. Indeed, in his letter *On Faith* Evagrius himself is clear that the final θέωσις will depend on grace and not on nature: human will be "deities / gods by grace."

In 26 Evagrius draws a specular connection between protology and eschatology that is strongly reminiscent of Origen, especially *Princ.* 2,8,3: the descent from intellect to soul to body at the beginning due to a differentiation of the *logika's* wills, and the final subsumption of body and soul under the intellect in the end, with the return to a complete unity of will:

The intellect, as I have mentioned, is one in nature, individual substance, and order. However, there was a time when the intellect, because of its free will, fell from its original order and was named "soul," and, having plunged further, was named "body." But there will come a time when *the body, the soul, and the intellect, thanks to a transformation of their wills, will become one* and the same thing. Since there will come a time when *the differentiations of the movements of their will shall vanish*, it will be elevated to the original state in which it was created. Its nature, hypostasis, and name will be one, known to God. What is elevated in its own nature is alone among all beings, because neither its place nor its name is known, and only the bare mind can say what its nature is. Please, do not be amazed at my claim regarding the *union of rational creatures with God the Father*, that these *will be one and the same nature in three Persons*, with no juxtaposition or change. [...] When *the intellects return to God*, like rivers to the sea, God *entirely transforms them into his own nature*, colour, and taste. They will be *one and the same thing*, and not many any more, in God's infinite and inseparable unity, in that they are *united and joined to God*. [...] Before sin operated a separation between intellects and God, just as the earth separated the sea and rivers, they were *one with God, without discrepancy*, but *when their sin was manifested, they were separated from God* and alienated from God [...] When *sin*, interposed between intellects and God, *has vanished*, they will be, not many, but again *one and the same*. However, even if I have said that the rivers were eternally in the sea, with *this I do not mean that rational creatures were eternally in God in their substance*, since, although they were completely united to God in God's Wisdom and creative power, *their actual creation did have a beginning*; however, one should not think that it will have an end, in that they are *united to God, who has no beginning and no end*.

(*Ep. ad Mel.* 26–30)

<sup>456</sup> On Gregory's doctrine of divine *epinoiai* see at least T. Aptsiauri, "Die Allegorese in der Schrift *Leben des Moses* Gregors von Nyssa im Kontext seiner Epinoia-Theorie," in *Gregory of Nyssa C. Eunomium II*, ed. L. Karfiková et al. (Leiden, 2007), 495–504.

It is further clarified here that the final ἔνωσις will not be a pantheistic confusion, but a unity of will, a concord. The idea that only the “bare intellect” can see the nature of God, whose name and place are unknown, is found also in *KG* 2,37 and 3,70: “One is, among all beings, without name, and its land/place is unknown”; “It is proper to the bare intellect to say what its nature is, and now there exists no clear answer to this question, whereas in the end there will be not even the question.” In the latter *kephalaion*, however, and in our passage from the Letter to Melania, it is not entirely sure whether the nature that the bare intellect can know is its own or God’s. The distinction between the eternal existence of the *logoi* or Ideas of all creatures in God and their creation as substances in time, which Evagrius makes in *Ep. ad Mel.* 26–30, clearly derives from Origen, *Princ.* 1,4,4–5:

*Deum quidem Patrem semper fuisse, semper habentem unigenitum Filium, qui simul et Sapientia [...] appellatur. [...] In hac igitur Sapientia, quae semper erat cum Patre, descripta semper inerat ac formata conditio et numquam erat quando eorum, quae futura erant, praefiguratio apud Sapientiam non erat. [...] ut neque ingenuitas neque coaeternas Deo creaturas dicamus, neque rursum, cum nihil boni prius egerit Deus, in id ut ageret esse conversum [...] Si utique in Sapientia omnia facta sunt, cum Sapientia semper fuerit, secundum praefigurationem et praeformationem semper erant in Sapientia ea, quae protinus etiam substantialiter facta sunt.*

Moreover, the infinity of God, which Evagrius supports in the passage at stake, was developed especially by Gregory of Nyssa, but was present in *nuce* already in Origen; all of them read it in Philo as well.<sup>457</sup> In the passage

<sup>457</sup> See Th. Böhm, *Theoria—Unendlichkeit—Aufstieg* (Leiden, 1996); P. Blowers, “Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of Perpetual Progress,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992) 151–171; Th. Alexopoulos, “Das unendliche Sichausstrecken (Epektasis) zum Guten bei Gregor von Nyssa und Plotin: eine vergleichende Untersuchung,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 10 (2006) 302–312; A. Geljon, “Divine Infinity in Gregory of Nyssa and Philo of Alexandria,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 59 (2005) 152–177. E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Göttingen, 1966) remarked on the absence of authentic theological or philosophical antecedents for Gregory of Nyssa’s notion of God’s infinity. Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull’anima*, in the second Integrative Essay indicates antecedents in Origen, and Mark Weedman calls attention to another antecedent: Hilary of Poitiers, in “The Polemical Context of Gregory of Nyssa’s Doctrine of Divine Infinity,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 (2010) 81–104. I observe that Hilary, in turn, was influenced by Origen in several respects and possibly in this as well. Origen was clear that “the greatness [μεγαλωσύνη] of God has no limit [πέρας]” and that God’s providence runs “from the infinite [ἐξ ἀπειρου] to the infinite [ἐπ’ ἀπειρον] and even further” (*Sel. in Ps.* 144). What is more, also because it is attested in texts of sure authenticity and preserved in Greek, God is expressly declared by Origen to be infinite, ἀπειρον (*CC* 3,77), and to be “from infinities to infinity,” ἐξ ἀπειρων ἐπ’ ἀπειρον (*De or.* 27,16).

from the Letter to Melania I quoted union with God, who is infinite, makes rational creatures eternal. Gregory of Nyssa grounded in the infinity of God the eternal growth of rational creatures (the model is Moses in *Vit. Mos.* 112–113), to the point that he identified human perfection (τελειότης) with “wishing to attain ever more in the Good” (ἀεὶ ἐθέλειν ἐν τῷ καλῷ τὸ πλεόν, *ibid.* 4–5). For “no limit could cut short the growth in the ascent to God, since no boundaries can be found to the Good, nor does the progression of desire for the Good end because it is ever satisfied” (*ibid.* 116).

In *Ep. ad Mel.* 32, Evagrius opens up a polemic against those who assume that habit becomes a second nature and claims that a habit can dispel another precedent habit. This polemic is on the same line as Origen’s polemic against Valentinianism and its determinism of natures. And in 38–39 Evagrius adheres to Origen’s differentiation of beings in sense-perceptible and intelligible. He speaks of “this perceptible body,” composed by the Wisdom of God from the four elements, and subject to God’s providence, thus indicating that there is another kind of bodies, which are not sense-perceptible. This is indeed in line with Origen and is further confirmed by the Syriac text of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, in which there is even a specific terminological differentiation between sense-perceptible, heavy bodies and spiritual bodies.<sup>458</sup> The reason that Evagrius indicates in 46 for the assumption of heavy bodies on the part of humans is the original fall, with which “they gave up being God’s image and wanted to become the image of animals.” This is along Nyssen’s lines. Evagrius also takes over Origen’s notion of the death of the soul, developed by the Alexandrian in his *Dialogue with Heraclides* and elsewhere, and drawn from Paul.<sup>459</sup> In 52, indeed, Evagrius observes that, just as the body dies without food, so does the soul die without its proper nourishment, which is virtue. This perfectly conforms to Origen’s notion of κακία as determining the death of the soul.

In 53–55, Evagrius observes that God has created humans in his image even though he had no need whatsoever for us, that it is impossible that God change his will, and that God wants no one to perish (2 Pet 3:9); this is the reason for the incarnation of Christ and his crucifixion: he took up conception and birth, and curse and death, in order to free us from all this, which is unnatural to him and, in God’s plan, also to us humans (56–58). In

<sup>458</sup> Commentary in my *Evagrius’ Kephalaia Gnostica—Chapters on Knowledge*, forthcoming.

<sup>459</sup> For this notion in Origen see Ramelli, “Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah”; for this notion in Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, Revelation, Middle Platonism, and imperial Stoicism see eadem, “1 Tim 5:6 and the Notion and Terminology of Spiritual Death.”

60, Evagrius defines Christ “the leaven of the divinity who, in its goodness, has hidden himself in the unleavened lump of humanity,” in order to “raise the whole lump to all that God is.” This description of Christ, which echoes Matt 13:33 and Luke 13:21, reminds me strongly of what is found in Ephrem’s quotation of Bardaisan in *Prose Refutations*, II p. 158,20 ff.: “The Logos is the unknown leaven that is hidden in the soul, which is deprived of knowledge and extraneous with respect to both the body and the Logos. If this is the case, the body cannot adhere to the soul, because it is earthly, nor can the soul adhere to the Logos, which is divine.” Ephrem attests that Bardaisan, like Origen and Evagrius, assigned to the human being a spirit or intellect in addition to a body and a soul, the latter per se understood as vital soul. It is in this sense that the soul is said not to have knowledge, which is rather proper to the intellect/logos/spirit, that is, the divine part in each human being (as Bardaisan’s fragments preserved by Porphyry show).<sup>460</sup> Evagrius, in his very Letter to Melania, similarly declares that in human intellect the Logos and the Spirit of God operate. I wonder whether Evagrius, who entertained the same concept of the tripartition of the human being, and the same view of apokatastasis, knew Bardaisan. Gregory of Nyssa in fact did, like Eusebius, and I suspect that Origen too did.<sup>461</sup>

And of course Evagrius’s idea that God, becoming a human being, allowed all humans to “become God” in *θέωσις* has deep roots in Origen, from whom it passed on to Athanasius: suffice it to think of Athanasius’s *De incarnatione*, at the end of which Athanasius himself summarises his argument: *ἐνανθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοπολήσεν*.<sup>462</sup> The distinction between image and likeness in Evagrius’s *Ep. ad Mel.* 62 (to be in the image of God belongs to human nature, but to be in the likeness of God is beyond human nature and depends on one’s efforts) is also typical of Origen.

The last paragraphs of the Letter to Melania are devoted again to the *telos*, characterised by *ἔνωσις* and *θέωσις*. In 63 Evagrius describes this as a great miracle, not anything natural but a gift of grace, that the nature of rational creatures, which became alienated from God because of the mutability of its free will, shall enjoy eternal *ἔνωσις* with its Creator, by grace. Not only the notion of the final apokatastasis as *ἔνωσις*, but also its being by grace was a

<sup>460</sup> See my *Bardaisan of Edessa*, 107–124; further argument in my “Bardaisan as a Christian Philosopher: A Reassessment of His Christology,” Lecture at the EASR/IAHR Conference, Messina 14–17 September 2009, forthcoming in the Proceedings, ed. G.S. Gasparro.

<sup>461</sup> See my *Bardaisan of Edessa* on the relationship between Origen’s and Bardaisan’s thought, and here 131–142 on Eusebius’s acquaintance with, and Gregory of Nyssa’s dependence on, Bardaisan.

<sup>462</sup> See above, the section on Athanasius.

tenet of Origen's eschatology. Evagrius describes "the *telos* of all intellects" as "the union of all these different knowledges in one and the same and unique real knowledge" and as "they all becoming this one without end" (66). Evagrius goes on to say that "all the different and distinct forms of knowledge will fuse together, into *one and the same essential knowledge*: all of those will become *this only knowledge, forever [...]* the great ark containing all the treasures of wisdom is the heart of Christ, on which John reclined during the Last Supper." Just because Christ is the ultimate knowledge, he is said to be "the very *telos* and ultimate blessedness" for all rational creatures (*Ep.* 63, which perfectly corresponds to this final part of the Letter to Melania).

The conclusive metaphor in the Letter to Melania, of God as merciful farmer, is the same as that of the final section of Gregory of Nyssa's *De anima et resurrectione*, where God, the good farmer, is said to take care even of the most damaged seeds and to make sure that absolutely all of them become fruitful. As Evagrius concludes, "the earth will be blessed, and the farmer, the soil, and those who have been fed will sing glory and praise to the *First Farmer*, to whom *all the seeds of blessing* belong, *in eternity*."

The Letter to Melania helps to understand many elements, especially concerning soteriology, in Evagrius's *Kephalaia Gnostica*. Here, Evagrius is very clear about the ontological priority of the Good (that is, God) over evil, which has momentous eschatological consequences in his view, just as according to Origen. Evil is no substance, but the result of a bad use of free will.<sup>463</sup> In the very first of his *Kephalaia Gnostica*—which I shall always quote here in their non-expurgated Syriac edition and my translation—he declares: "There is nothing that is opposed to the first Good, because it is Good in its essence, and nothing is opposed to its essence" (*KG* 1,1). Since the first Good is God, that nothing is opposed to the first Good means that nothing is opposed to God. This is why in *KG* 1,89 Evagrius states that "The whole of the rational nature has been naturally made in order to exist, and to be knowing, and God is essential knowledge (or gnosis)<sup>464</sup>."

<sup>463</sup> This interpretation, which is the very same as Origen's, is put forward in *Περὶ λογισμῶν* 19: the cause of sin is not anything endowed with a substantial existence (ὑφεστὸς κατ' οὐσίαν), but a pleasure that is generated by free will, which forces the intellect to make a bad use of God's creatures. Likewise, in *Disc.* 118 evil is described as "the movement of free will toward the worse" and *ibid.* 165 it is stated that it is the moral subject who is responsible (αἴτιος) for the appearance of evil and for its disappearance as well.

<sup>464</sup> On the concept of "gnosis" in Evagrius see S. Otto, "Esoterik und individualistische Gnosis: der mönchische Platonismus des Evagrius," in *Die Antike im Umbruch*, ed. Idem (München, 1974), 65–81; A. Guillaumont, "La vie gnostique selon Évagre le Pontique," *Annuaire du Collège de France* 80 (1979–1980), 467–470; Idem, "Le gnostique chez Clément

The rational nature has non-being as its contrary, and knowledge has evilness and ignorance as its contrary, but none of these things is contrary to God."

It is notable that the opposite of knowledge for Evagrius—whose idea of γνῶσις is the direct descendant of Clement of Alexandria's notion of γνῶσις, in its highest degree inseparable from that of θέωσις—is not only *ignorance*, which is obvious, but also *evil(ness)*. Knowledge, for Evagrius, cannot intrinsically be knowledge for evil, but only for the Good. Evil<sup>465</sup> goes together with ignorance, and not with knowledge. Indeed in Evagrius's ethical intellectualism—which is parallel to that of Origen and Nyssen—the choice of evil is a result of an obfuscated knowledge. In *KG* 1,41 Evagrius insists on the ontological priority of Good/goodness/virtue over evil/evilness/vice:

If death comes after life and illness after health, it is clear that *evilness, too, is secondary vis-à-vis virtue*: for vice is the death and illness of the soul, but *virtue comes before*.

This is what Origen hammered home, for instance in *Hom. in Ier.* 2,1: "In all humans what is in the image of God [*sc.* virtue] *comes before* the image of evil [*sc.* vice]," it is πρᾶν. Note that illness is often taken spiritually by Evagrius, who followed in Clement's and Origen's footsteps in seeing Christ as the infallible Physician of souls.<sup>466</sup> From the ontological—and chronological—priority of Good/virtue over evil/vice, Evagrius, like Origen and Nyssen, infers the eschatological disappearance of all evil:

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d' Alexandrie et chez Évagre," in *Alexandria: Hellénisme, judaïsme et christianisme à Alexandrie. Mélanges Mondésert* (Paris, 1987), 195–201 = *Études sur la spiritualité de l'Orient chrétien* (Begrolles-en-Mauges, 1996), 151–160. On Evagrius's theory of a progression from πρᾶν to γνῶσις and to θεολογική see Idem, "Un philosophe au désert: Évagre le Pontique," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 181 (1972) 29–56 = *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien* (Begrolles-en-Mauges, 1979), 185–212; Kostantinovsky, *Evagrius*, 27–76; Y. Spiteris, "La Conoscenza 'esperienza' di Dio e la teologia nella prospettiva orientale," *Antoniano* 72 (1997) 365–426.

<sup>465</sup> On moral evil in Evagrius see G. Tsakiridis, *Evagrius Ponticus and Cognitive Science: A Look at Moral Evil and the Thoughts* (Eugene, OR, 2010). Like almost all scholars, the author assumes that the eight evil λογισμοί were transmitted by "John Cassian" to the Western church; however, see now the rereading of Cassian by Tzamalikos (cf. below, Ch. 4, section on Cassian).

<sup>466</sup> See, e.g., Περὶ λογισμῶν 3 and 10; *Schol.* 2 in *Ps.* 102,3; *Schol.* 9 in *Ps.* 106,20; *Schol.* 6 in *Ps.* 144,15; *Schol.* 2 in *Ps.* 145,7; *Ep.* 42; 51; 52; 55; 57; 60. On the spiritual interpretation of illness in Origen see my "Disability in Bardaisan and Origen. Between the Stoic *Adiaphora* and the Lord's Grace," in *Gestörte Lektüre. 'Disability' als hermeneutische Leitkategorie biblischer Exegese*, eds. W. Grünstäudl–M. Schiefer (Stuttgart, 2012), 141–159; in Evagrius see M. Tobon, "The Health of the Soul: ἀπάθεια in Evagrius Ponticus," in *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010) 187–203.

There was a time when evil(ness) did not exist, and there will come a time when *it will no more exist* [ἦν γὰρ ὅτε οὐκ ἦν κακία καὶ ἔσται ὅτε οὐκ ἔσται]. But there was no time when the Good/virtue did not exist, and there will be *no time when it will no more exist*. For the seed of the good energies is inextinguishable. (KG 1,40 = Περὶ λογισμῶν 31)

This reflection was so important to Evagrius that he repeated it in two different works, in the very same terms, and even in three more passages: *Ep.* 43 and 59, and *Schol.* 62 in *Prov.* 5,14.<sup>467</sup> Immediately afterwards, in the same *kephalaion* and in the same chapter of Περὶ λογισμῶν, Evagrius offers a Scriptural motivation for the inextinguishability of the germs or seeds of virtue: “I am convinced of this by Dives in the Gospel, who, albeit condemned to hell because of his vice, *entertained merciful thoughts* toward his siblings, and mercy is the best seed of the energies of the Good” (cf. *Praktikos* 1,65; PG 40,1240AB). The germs of virtue—the Good—never die, not even in hell, since they come from God, who is the Good itself. It is evil, which is no creature of God, that will disappear in the end, and not virtue/goodness. It is probable that Evagrius was acquainted with the exegesis of the Lukan parable of Dives and Lazarus offered by Nyssen in his *De anima*, all the more in that he understands hell exactly as Nyssen presents it in that passage, and as Origen also interpreted it,<sup>468</sup> i.e. as “the darkness of the ignorance of those who cannot contemplate God.”<sup>469</sup>

The same interpretation appears in *Gnostikos* 36, where moreover Evagrius shows the same concerns as Origen did about the divulgation of the apokatastasis doctrine:

The highest doctrine concerning the Judgement should remain *unknown to mundane and young people*, in that it can easily produce despise and neglect. For they do not know that the suffering of a rational soul condemned to punishment *consists in ignorance*.

Indeed, Evagrius opposes Sheol to Paradise, the latter being conceived as a place of knowledge: “Just as Paradise is the place of instruction for the righteous, so can Sheol produce the torment of the impious” (KG 6,8), and

<sup>467</sup> See the edition by P. Géhin, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, Sources Chrétiennes 340 (Paris, 1987).

<sup>468</sup> Evagrius interprets it in a spiritual/allegorical sense, following Origen and Gregory Nyssen. Examples of allegorical exegesis of Scripture in his *Kephalaia Gnostica* are found, for instance, in KG 4,46; 4,53; 4,56; 4,79; 5,35; 5,88; 6,49; 6,64. Evagrius, notably, prescribes to allegorise only good discourses in Scripture, and not evil ones (*Gnost.* 21).

<sup>469</sup> *Philokalia. Testi di ascetica e mistica della Chiesa orientale*, ed. G. Vannucci (Florence, 1978), 49.

that torments will come in a variety of degrees is clear from *Περὶ λογισμῶν* 18, where Evagrius also insists on the notion of the death of the soul, which was very dear to Origen, even using Ez 18:4 and 20 ("the soul that sins will die"), Origen's favourite Biblical quotation in this connection. Beatitude, on the contrary, is identified by Evagrius with the knowledge and contemplation of God, the perfect "gnosis" and perfect "theoria." Of the latter Evagrius often speaks in his *Kephalaia Gnostica*, for instance in 1,27, in which he classifies all forms of θεωρία: "Five are the main contemplations, under which every contemplation is classified: the first is said to be the contemplation of the adorable and holy Trinity; the second and the third, the contemplation of incorporeal realities and of bodies; the fourth and fifth, the contemplation of the Judgement and of Providence." Julia Konstantinovskiy maintains that these five contemplations are arranged in a hierarchical order, from the highest to the lowest levels.<sup>470</sup> It is certainly the case that the θεωρία of the Trinity is the highest; however, it is not clear that the contemplation of Providence, for instance, is lower than that of the Judgement or that of bodies. What I suspect is that Evagrius is following a "historical" order, starting from God who is the principle of all, passing on to the creation of intelligent beings, and then of material bodies, until the judgements that close every aeon, the last Judgement that will conclude all aeons, and God's Providence that accompanies creatures during all aeons and that will overcome in the end, at the eventual apokatastasis after all aeons and all judgements.

"Gnosis" is also referred to in *Kephalaia Practica* 2–3: "The Kingdom of heavens is the *apatheia* in the soul, along with the true knowledge of beings. The Kingdom of God is the knowledge [γνώσις] of the Holy Trinity, which proceeds along with the intellect's getting closer to it." The process of the intellect's getting closer to God and acquiring ever further knowledge reminds one of Nyssen's epestatic process. The knowledge of created beings is the knowledge of their *logoi*;<sup>471</sup> the knowledge of the Trinity is a *telos* in itself; this is why Evagrius insists: "Let us do everything for the sake of the knowledge of God" (*Kephalaia Practica* 32). That human *telos*, beatitude, is knowledge is repeated by Evagrius also in his Letter 56, with a reference to the beatitude in Matth 5:8, "Blessed are the pure of heart, because they will see God." Evagrius can thus explain that seeing God, which means knowing

<sup>470</sup> *Evagrius Ponticus*, 48.

<sup>471</sup> Thus, for instance, in *Praktikos* 92 Evagrius cites Anthony the Great, who deemed the contemplation of creation aimed at the knowledge "of the nature [φύσις] of creatures."



God, constitutes blessedness: Jesus “proclaims them blessed not because of their purity, but because of their seeing God; for purity is the impassivity [ἀπάθεια] of the rational soul, whereas seeing God is the true knowledge [γνώσις] of the Holy Trinity, who must be adored.”<sup>472</sup>

All rational creatures, who have become angels, humans, or demons due to their different choices—a conception that is evidently identical to that of Origen—, will attain the knowledge of God and the blessedness of the *telos*. None of them, according to Evagrius just as according to Origen and Nyssen, is evil by nature. In *KG* 4,59 Evagrius explains that, “if an essence is not said to be superior or inferior to another, and if a demon has been called by our Saviour worse than another demon, it is evident that demons *are not evil in their essence*.” The three main categories of rational creatures are characterised by three different kinds of relation to the contemplation of beings or θεωρία: “Peculiar to angels is to always be nourished with the contemplation of beings; to humans is to not always (be nourished with it), and to demons is (to be nourished with it) neither in a time nor without time” (*KG* 3,4). But still, after the vanishing of all evil, the eventual apokatastasis will involve all rational creatures, without exclusion. In this respect, Evagrius agrees with Origen and Nyssen, although it is generally observed that he insists more on the intellectual aspect, that of contemplation.<sup>473</sup>

Neither in Evagrius's view, however, is θεωρία disjoined from ἀγάπη, which is also a central element in apokatastasis according to both Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. In *KG* 1,86 Evagrius remarks that “*Love* is the perfect state of the rational soul, a state in which the soul cannot love anything which is among corruptible beings more than the *knowledge* of God.” Love and knowledge are here inseparable. Just as for Nyssen, for Evagrius too ἀγάπη is no πάθος but impassibility;<sup>474</sup> this is why it will abide in the perfect state, in the end. The same close connection is drawn by Evagrius in 4,50: “There is one good kind of *love*, which is forever: that which true *knowledge* elects, and it is said to be *inseparable from the intellect*.” But in 3,58, too, the relationship

<sup>472</sup> Ed. P. Géhin, “Nouveaux fragments grecs des Lettres d’Évagre,” *Revue d’Histoire des Textes* 24 (1994) 117–147.

<sup>473</sup> See Daley, *Hope*, 91; H.U. von Balthasar, “Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Pontikus,” *Zeitschrift für Askese und Mystik* (1939) 31–47; Guillaumont, *Les Kephalaia Gnostica*.

<sup>474</sup> See, e.g., *Eul.* 22: “Love is the bond of *impassibility* and the *expunging of passions* [...] Love possesses nothing of its own apart from God, for God is Love itself” (tr. Sinkewicz with small changes). The link between impassibility (ἀπάθεια) and love (ἀγάπη) is also stressed in *Praktikos* 8: “love is the offspring of impassibility” (tr. Sinkewicz).

is explained: "The one who must see written things needs light, and the one who must *learn* the wisdom of beings needs spiritual *love*." Love is indispensable for knowledge and plays the same role as light does in vision, which is itself a metaphor for knowledge;<sup>475</sup> therefore, for Evagrius there can be no separation whatsoever between love and knowledge. Indeed, I have already pointed out that in his view the opposite of knowledge is not only ignorance, but also evilness, which results from a lack of love for the Good. this is explained by the fact that he conceives ignorance as "the shadow of evil," thus showing that to his mind ignorance and evil cannot exist independently of one another. Therefore, in *KG* 4,29 Evagrius declares:

If the earth were destroyed, night would no more exist on the face of the firmament. Likewise, *when evil has been eliminated, ignorance will no more exist* among rational creatures, because *ignorance is the shadow of evil*.

The eradication of evil and ignorance from among all rational creatures will take place in the eventual apokatastasis. The universality of apokatastasis is made clear by Evagrius, for instance in *KG* 3,72:

The heritage of Christ is the knowledge of the Unity. Now, if *all* will become coheirs of Christ, *all* will know the holy Unity. However, it is impossible that they become his coheirs, unless they first have become his heirs.

Indeed, Evagrius, like Origen and like Nyssen in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, interprets 1 Cor 15:24–28, which describes the final submission of all to Christ, as the final salvation of all. This submission-salvation will take place through virtue and knowledge:

Christ's feet are the *πρακτική* and the *θεωρία*, and if Christ puts *all* enemies under his feet, *all* will therefore come to know the *πρακτική* and the *θεωρία*.<sup>476</sup>  
(*KG* 6,15)

The universality of the eventual submission-salvation is highlighted by Evagrius also in *KG* 6,27:

<sup>475</sup> On Evagrius' theology of light see H.-V. Beyer, "Die Lichtlehre der Mönche des vierzehnten und des vierten Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 31 (1981) 473–512; H. Alfeyev, "The Patristic Background of St. Symeon the New Theologian's Doctrine of the Divine Light," in *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997) 229–238, *praes.* 229–231; Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius*, 77–108.

<sup>476</sup> Cf. *Schol.* 2 in *Ps.* 126,1: "by means of the *πρακτική* the soul has Christ as master of the house; by means of the *φυσική* it has him as king; and by means of *θεολογία* as God. The first two states are necessarily implied by the third, just as the first is by the second; but the second and third states, for now, are not necessarily implied by the first."

If all the nations will come to bow before the Lord, clearly also those who want war will come; and if this is the case, *the whole nature of the rational creatures will submit to the name of the Lord*, who makes known the Father who is in him. Indeed, he is the Name that is superior to all other names.

The eventual submission of all to Christ will coincide with the eventual salvation of all. This is an equation that Evagrius found in Origen and appropriated. All will submit to Christ, put themselves “under his feet,” by converting to the Good, that is, God, rejecting evil, and thus being saved. In *Schol. in Ps.* 21,29 Evagrius indeed states that the sentence “for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1 Cor 15:25) means that Christ will have to go on to reign “until all the unrighteous [ἄδικοι] have become righteous [δίκαιοι].” In this condition, all will be immortal and will not risk becoming earthy again. The notion that Christ’s reign, during which he will submit all, will achieve the conversion and salvation of all was typical of Origen, from whom Eusebius also took it, when he spoke of the θεραπευτική and διορθωτική βασιλεία of Christ.<sup>477</sup> This is why I doubt that Evagrius is original on this score.<sup>478</sup> Origen went so far as to assert that until one single rational creature has not yet converted to the Good, Christ cannot submit to the Father but must go on to reign. The idea itself that God destroys the unrighteous by transforming them into righteous, expressed by Evagrius in *Schol. in Prov.* 355,<sup>479</sup> is one on which Origen had very much insisted. Even the examples that Evagrius offers, that of Matthew the publican transformed by the Lord into a righteous man, and especially that of Paul “the persecutor,” transformed by the Lord into an apostle of Christ (*Schol. in Ps.* 17,8–9<sup>480</sup>), are

<sup>477</sup> See above in this same chapter, the section on Eusebius.

<sup>478</sup> “He must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet.’ How this is to happen, however, *constitutes Evagrius’s originality*. The defeat of Christ’s enemies will come about when all the wicked, including evil men, demons, and the devil himself, become righteous” (Konstantinovskiy, *Evagrius*, 157, emphasis mine; the book on the whole, however, is very good).

<sup>479</sup> “Once the impious have ceased to be such, they will become righteous [δίκαιοι]. Indeed, in this passage [sc. concerning the destruction of the impious in Ps 28:28] ‘destruction’ [ἀπώλεια] means the vanishing of the impiety. Precisely in this way, the Lord brought about the destruction of the publican Matthew, by giving him the grace of righteousness.” Evagrius’s definition of righteousness in *Praktikos* 89 comes directly from Plato: the task of δικαιοσύνη “is to generate the symphony and harmony of all parts of the soul.”

<sup>480</sup> Evagrius is commenting on the fire that is said in Ps 17:8–9 to come from the face of the Lord and identifies it with God’s action of “destroying evil habits,” so as to transform people into better persons. Evagrius adds two examples: that of Matthew, who was a publican, and that of Paul, who was “a persecutor and a violent man,” but became an apostle of Jesus Christ and a righteous man.

the very same as those given by Origen in his *Homilies on Jeremiah*: "Who is the person whom 'I shall kill?' It is Paul the traitor, Paul the persecutor; and 'I shall make him live,' so that he may become Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ" (1,15–16). Even the interpretation of God's fire as God's action of burning away evil from sinners (e.g. again in *Schol. in Ps.* 17,8–9) is the same as Origen had put forward in many passages, for instance in *CC* 6,70: "God is the fire that consumes [...] every kind of sin," or in *Hom. in Ier.* 1,15–16, where the action of burning chaff is interpreted as the purification of sinners from evil. Furthermore, the very image of God's destroying evil and planting a new garden, used by Evagrius in *Schol. in Ps.* 43,3 ("God eradicates evilness and ignorance, and instead plants virtue and knowledge"), is the same as that used by Origen in *Hom. in Ier.* 1,16: sin and vice, in all its varieties, will be eradicated, so that upon the ruins of evil God may plant the garden of the Good, the new Paradise. Indeed, even the main scriptural pillars with which Evagrius buttresses the doctrine of apokatastasis, 1 Cor 15:24–28 and John 17:21–22, are the very same which Origen mainly buttressed it: the submission of all enemies and the annihilation of evil and death during Christ's reign, the handing over of the Kingdom to the Father, and the final unity.<sup>481</sup>

The submission of all to Christ, who will in turn submit to God, according to 1 Cor 15:28, will take place at the end of all aeons, in the very *telos*, when all will be brought to unity: "When Christ will no longer be impressed in various aeons and all sorts of names, then he too will submit to God the Father, and will delight in the knowledge of God alone. This knowledge is not divided in aeons and increments of rational creatures" (*KG* 6,33). Indeed, Evagrius's conception of aeons is close to Origen's: there are several aeons (αἰῶνες, not worlds or κόσμοι) before the final apokatastasis. During the aeons, rational creatures increase their virtue and knowledge, and get purified; after all this has been accomplished, the series of aeons will cease and the fullness of divine αἰδιότης, or absolute eternity, will remain. "After the aeons, God will make us 'in the likeness of the image of his Son,' if the image of the

<sup>481</sup> This is also the basis of Origen's and Evagrius's distinction between the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of God, only the latter being the ultimate reality: "They say the Kingdom of Christ is every material knowledge, while that of God the Father is immaterial knowledge" (*Ep.* 63). Origen clearly inspired Evagrius on this score too: he identified Christ's Kingdom with the contemplation of the *logoi* of salvation and the accomplishment of the works of justice and the other virtues, and the Kingdom of God with the blessed, perfect condition of the intellect (*De or.* 25). Though, Christ's Kingdom is not opposed to God's, but absorbed in it.

Son is the essential knowledge of God the Father [...] The more the aeons will increase, the more the intellections appropriate to them will have us know the Holy Trinity" (KG 6,34; 6,67). Evagrius closely adheres to Origen in claiming that the succession of aeons is not infinite—as Origen's notion of aeons was misrepresented by Augustine and others during the Origenistic controversy—, but it had a beginning and will thus have an end: "Just as the destruction of the last aeon *will not be followed by a new creation*, so also the creation of the first aeon was not preceded by a destruction" (KG 5,89). Aeons are necessary to the *logika's* spiritual and intellectual development. Were the *telos* now, it would catch most of them dramatically behind in such a development. Only once they are perfect will God bestow his goods on them: "If in the aeons to come God is to show his goodness to rational creatures, it is clear that he will do so after this aeon that comes, since beforehand rational creatures will be unable to receive his holy richness" (KG 4,38).

Each aeon is aimed at the knowledge of God on the part of rational creatures: "An aeon is a natural system that includes the various and different bodies of rational creatures, for the sake of the knowledge of God" (KG 3,36). The very definition of an αἰών as a "natural system" is entirely dependent on Origen. According to Evagrius, just as to Origen, each aeon begins with the end of the preceding one and the Judgement that follows the latter. In this Judgement, God establishes the role and the kind of body that each rational creature will have in the new aeon, on the basis of the moral and spiritual development of each one: "A Judgement of God is the coming into being of an aeon, to which he gives a mortal body in accord with the degree (of development) of each rational creature" (KG 3,38).<sup>482</sup>

A painstaking analysis of the terminology of aeons and eternity in the Greek extant works of Evagrius<sup>483</sup> and in the Syriac text of his *Kephalaia Gnostica*<sup>484</sup> strongly confirms his conception of aeons preceded by eternity

<sup>482</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 3,47; *Schol.* 275 in *Prov.* 24,22: "a Judgment is the creation of a world that allots bodies to every intellectual creature according to" its spiritual development; *Schol.* 2 in *Ps.* 134,6: the division of rational creatures into angels, humans, and demons, and their allotment to different realms, places, or states is the result of every Judgment. This is why "the exact knowledge of these realms/states and the different bodies [sc. allotted to angels, humans, and demons] consists in the *logoi* regarding the Judgment." A similar principle is expounded in *Schol.* 8 in *Eccl.* 2,10: "we receive knowledge according to our state" or *κατάστασις*. Indeed, *ἀπο-κατάστασις* is a return to the original state without sin and therefore without heavy bodies.

<sup>483</sup> Undertaken in Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 199–203.

<sup>484</sup> On which see my *Evagrius' Chapters on Knowledge*. It is easy to spot where the underlying Greek was αἰώνιος.

and followed by the eternity of apokatastasis. Evagrius, also due to the influence of Scriptural quotations, uses the adjective αἰώνιος more frequently than αἰθεριος, which refers to intelligible and spiritual things and indicates absolute eternity, that of apokatastasis itself and of God (indeed, the *telos* is participation in the life of God). Instead, Evagrius applies αἰώνιος to God in scriptural quotations, and only in reference to God can this adjective bear the connotation of "eternal"; in other cases it may mean "remote in time, ancient"; it also refers to life in the world to come and the judgement in the next world, which will determine the condition of each one in the αἰών, as long as the αἰών will last. Αἰώνιος is used of punishment in the future αἰών as well, also in the form of a threat (such as in *Mag. disc.* 25–26: τῇ ἀπειλῇ τῆς αἰωνίου κολάσεως). It is also used of fire in the future aeon (e.g., *De orat.* PG 79,1197: punishment ἐν πυρὶ αἰωνίῳ; *Ad mon.* PG 79,1240), sometimes in connection with the explicit expression αἰών μέλλων: ἐν τῷ αἰώνι τῷ μέλλοντι (*In Prov.* p. 101,16; see also *ibid.* 104,25; 119,15). The future aeon(s) will last until apokatastasis, when there will come an end to all aeons and there will no longer be either sinners or evil, which did not exist in the beginning and will not endure in the end:

Virtue, the Good, will *consume evil*, and this will come to pass in the future aeon, until *evilness will be eliminated* [τοῦτο δὲ γενήσεται ἐν τῷ αἰώνι τῷ μέλλοντι, ἕως ἂν ἐκλείπῃ ἡ κακία]. (*In Prov.* p. 108,9)

This demonstrates that the future aeon will last until all evil is eliminated, after which and thanks to which universal restoration can finally take place, no longer in an aeon, but in the eternity of apokatastasis.

Evagrius also refers αἰώνιος to the Judgement in the next world. In a work destined to those who have attained *apatheia* through the *praktikē* and have become "gnostics" by the achievement of knowledge, Περὶ λογισμῶν PG 79,1213,<sup>485</sup> both punishment and the judgement in the next world are called αἰώνιοι (κολάσεως δὲ καὶ κρίσεως αἰωνίου). He is not referring to an "eternal judgement," but to a judgement in the next world; indeed, Evagrius, like Origen, as I have mentioned, posited a judgement prior to each aeon, which determines one's blessedness or purification in that aeon itself. Therefore, what will be established in the judgement in the future world will remain until apokatastasis. In *Exp. mon.* PG 40,1261, Evagrius invites readers to

<sup>485</sup> Interestingly, the very sense in which Evagrius uses λογισμός, as an evil thought inspired by a demon, depends on Origen. See now the edition by P. Géhin-A. and C. Guillaumont, *Évagre le Pontique. Sur le pensées*, SChr 438 (Paris, 1998).

consider torments in the next world: “think of what awaits sinners: the shame before God and Christ himself [...] and all the places of punishment: the fire in the next world [πῦρ αἰώνιον], the worm that does not die [ἀτελεύτητος] ...” Evagrius did not consider either the fire or the worm eternal, but he had no problem with using αἰώνιον and ἀτελεύτητος.

In *Exh. ad mon.* PG 79,1237—a passage I have already cited in the chapter on Nazianzen, for the strong affinities it shows with a passage of Nazianzen himself—he even uses expressions that would suggest eternity, but that only refer to the future aeon, and not to apokatastasis: καταναλωθήσεται πᾶς ἁμαρτωλὸς ὑπὸ τοῦ αἰώνιου πυρὸς καὶ οὐ δύναται τελευτῆσαι· ἀθάνατα γὰρ βασιανισθήσεται. Like Origen, in fact, Evagrius held that the fire will burn evil in sinners in order to purify them: οὐ δύναται τελευτῆσαι is a paraphrase of the Gospel expression πῦρ ἄσβεστον, “inextinguishable,” in that it is not a physical and terrestrial fire but rather precisely αἰώνιον, pertaining to the non-sensible but intelligible things of the next world. This is the sense in which Evagrius, like many of the Fathers, uses ἀθάνατον, “deathless”: the πῦρ ἄσβεστον and ἀθάνατον and αἰώνιον is so called not in order to declare it eternal, but to indicate that it is impossible to extinguish it, unlike the fire of this world, and that it pertains to the other world. This confirms that the future aeon is regarded by Evagrius as prior to apokatastasis, where there will be neither foolish nor vicious people, since all will have been purified in fire, evil will have disappeared utterly, and all will be in God, as it was at the beginning.

With an idea that is also found in Origen and Gregory Nyssen, Evagrius thinks that during the aeons angels help rational creatures to attain salvation, by means of instruction and the liberation from passions: “By means of the intellections of exhortation, the holy angels purify us from evilness and make us free from passions; by means of those of nature and of the divine *logoi*, they free us from ignorance and make us wise and ‘gnostics’” (KG 6,35). For “the intellects of the heavenly powers are pure and full of science, and their bodies are lights that shine over those who get close to them,” and “if it is true that ‘the One who has ascended over all heavens’ has ‘accomplished everything,’ each host of the heavenly powers has really learnt the intellections that *concern Providence*, by means of which *they quickly push the creatures who are inferior to them toward virtue and the knowledge of God*” (KG 3,5; 6,76). The cooperation of angels to the salvation of rational creatures is repeatedly highlighted by Evagrius: “The holy angels instruct some people by means of words, recuperate others by means of dreams; make others chaste thanks to nocturnal scares, and bring yet others back to virtue even by means of beating” (KG 6,86). According to Evagrius, it is not only angels

who cooperate with Providence, but even celestial bodies—which Evagrius, like other ancient authors, regarded as animated—and whatever creature endowed with spiritual knowledge: “It is not only the holy angels who collaborate with us for the sake of our salvation, but heavenly bodies as well [...] Whoever has attained spiritual knowledge will help the holy angels and *bring back rational souls from evilness to virtue and from ignorance to knowledge*” (KG 6,88.90).

These beings endowed with spiritual knowledge are rational creatures who, for Evagrius just as for Origen, can switch from one order to another between angels, humans, and demons, during the aeons, according to their spiritual progress or regression: “Among humans, some will be in feast together with angels, others will mingle with the host of demons, and yet others will be tormented together with the human beings who have defiled themselves with deficiencies”; “the firstborns are the rational creatures who in each one of the aeons get closer to the excellent transformation,” which is the transformation into a better state, for instance from human to angel, and ultimately θεῶσις; “From the order of angels come the order of archangels and that of the psychic;<sup>486</sup> from that of the psychic, that of demons and that of human beings; from that of human beings angels and demons will derive in turn, if it is true that a demon is the one who, because of excess of *thymos*, has fallen from the *praktikē* and has been joined to a dark and extended (immortal) body” (KG 5,9–11). Human beings, thanks to their free will, can become either good like angels or evil like demons; this is why “humans are intermediate between angels and demons” (KG 4,13). Spiritual death reigns over demons, because of their choice for evil, whereas spiritual life reigns over angels; humans, being in the aforementioned intermediate state, are ruled by both life and death, again understood in the spiritual sense: “The whole rational nature is divided into three parts, and life reigns over one, death and life over the other one, and only death over the third” (KG 4,65).

According to Evagrius, just as according to Origen and Nyssen, and partially also to Clement, the process of improvement and purification takes place through the aeons that succeed to one another before the eventual apokatastasis, and suffering is part and parcel of this process: “Punishment is the fiery suffering that *purifies* the part of the soul that is liable to passions” (KG 3,18). Suffering is purifying, and the purifying fire’s action is that of burning evil away from the sinner: “A part of the fire is capable to burn,

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<sup>486</sup> For the textual justification of this translation of mine see my edition of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*.



and another is incapable. And capable to burn is that which burns sense-perceptible matter, whereas incapable to burn is that which is destructive of the torment of those tormented. And the former does not burn the whole of the sense-perceptible mass, whereas the latter is able to burn the whole of the mass of the torment" (*KG* 3,39). Indeed, Evagrius, consistently with his notion of purifying fire, interprets Matth 3:12, on the distinction of chaff and wheat, in the same way as Origen did; he understands that what the divine fire will burn like chaff and destroy are not sinners themselves, but their sins and evilness: "if it is the case that the wheat bears the symbol of virtue and the chaff the symbol of evilness, the world to come is the symbol of the amber that will attract the chaff to it" (*KG* 2,26). The Syriac word for "amber" is the transcription of Latin *succinum*, through Greek σούκινος. Besides its decorative function, in the ancient world amber (ἤλεκτρον) was known also for its power of attracting things due to its electricity. The attraction of chaff in the world to come clearly means the liberation of wheat from it.

Another agricultural metaphor is used by Evagrius when he follows 1 Cor 15 in *KG* 2,25: "Just as this body is called the seed of the future ear, so will also this aeon be called seed of the one that will come after it" (see also *KG* 1,24<sup>487</sup>). This metaphor refers to the resurrection, but for Evagrius, just as for Origen, "resurrection" does not simply mean the resurrection of the body. Evagrius lists three types of resurrection, all of which are a kind of apokatastasis or restoration to the original and perfect state: the resurrection of the body, which is the passage from a corruptible to an incorruptible body; that of the soul, which is the passage from a passible to an impassible soul, and that of the spirit or intellect, which is the passage from ignorance to true knowledge (*KG* 5,19.22.25). Indeed, the resurrection of the intellect is referred to by Evagrius in *KG* 2,15 in the same terms: "When the rational nature receives the contemplation (*theōria*) that is about it, then also all the faculty/power of the intellect will be healthy" (*KG* 2,15). Evagrius, like Origen and Gregory Nyssen, clearly entertains a *holistic* idea of the resurrection, which will involve, not only the body, but the whole of the human being, including its soul and its intellect: the soul will be finally freed from all πάθη and will attain ἀπάθεια, and the intellect will be illuminated

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<sup>487</sup> "If the wheat ear is in the seed in potency, perfection too is found, in potency, in the person who is susceptible of it. Now, if this is the case, the wheat seed and what is in it are not the same thing, nor the wheat ear and what is in the seed; but the seed of what is included by the ear and the ear of this seed are in fact the same thing. And, indeed, even though the seed becomes an ear, the seed of what is in the ear has not yet received the ear. But when it is liberated from the ear and from the seed, it will have the ear of that first seed."

and vivified by knowledge. Such a resurrection/vivification is tantamount to restoration/apokatastasis: "Life has vivified at the beginning living beings; subsequently, those who are alive and those who die; in the end, it will vivify also the dead" (KG 5,20). The final vivification of the dead does not only refer to physical resurrection, but also to the spiritual resurrection of those who have died because of sin. This is the death to which the Life that is Christ is opposed.

Life is Christ, and Christ-Logos-Wisdom is God; the *telos* of all *logika* is God, who created them for himself, as Evagrius observes in KG 4,1: "God has planted the *logika* for Himself; God's Wisdom, in turn, has grown in them, while he read to them writings of all sorts." Precisely in order to allow all rational creatures to return to God, for whom they were created, Christ assumed humanity, died, and rose, calling all to life in the world to come: "If it is the case that *on the third day Christ 'is done'* and that, the day before, the one who gathered wood in the desert 'was burnt,' it is clear that today it is the day called *Friday*, at whose eleventh hour *the peoples have been called by our Saviour to life in the world to come*" (KG 4,26). Again:

If today is that which is called *Friday*, in which our Saviour was crucified, indeed, all those who are dead are the image of his sepulchre: those in which the *justice of God is dead, which will revive on the third day and will rise, when it will take on a spiritual body*, if it is true that "today and tomorrow he works miracles, and *on the third day is done* [Lk 13:32]." (KG 1,90)

The justice of God is dead in all those who are dead in sin, but they all will rise thanks to Christ's resurrection, and then the very justice of God will revive, since those who will be resurrected spiritually will rise in that they will be justified. Christ's justice is evident in the partial Judgements that take place after each aeon, and in which each rational creature is assigned a given body and place in the world according to its spiritual progress, but Christ's mercy is evident from the fact that he extends divine Providence to all, including those who would not deserve it: "As for the righteous Judgement of our Christ, the transformation of the bodies, of the lands, and of the aeons reveals it. As for his forbearance of spirit, on the other hand, those who fight against virtue reveal it. But above all his mercy, it is *those who are guided by his Providence without being worthy* that reveal it" (KG 2,59).

The essentiality of Christ's role in the process that leads to the eventual apokatastasis is emphasised by Evagrius in several passages. In KG 3,57, for instance, Christ's role is that of teacher of intellects: "Just as those who teach children the letters write them on tablets, in the same way Christ, too, while he teaches his wisdom to rational creatures, has traced it in the nature of the mortal body." It is remarkable that in his task Christ,

according to Evagrius, uses mortal bodies: these, far from being evil, are an indispensable instrument in the process of the instruction of intellects that ultimately leads to apokatastasis. Christ providentially leads all *logika* through the aeons in their process of purification and perfecting whose *telos* is apokatastasis, characterised by perfect unity, both for Evagrius and for Origen:

Who will be able to express God's grace? Who will investigate the *logoi* of Providence, and how *Christ leads* the rational nature throughout the aeons up to the *union of the Holy Unity*? (KG 4,89)

I have already pointed out Evagrius's idea of Christ's mercy. In KG 1,72 he insists again on it, which is displayed in Christ's orienting even fools away from evilness and toward virtue: "The Lord has mercy upon the one to whom he gives spiritual knowledge, if it is true that 'the just walks in the light, whereas the fool in darkness.' *But* the Lord has mercy upon the fool as well, in that he does not punish him at once, or in that he pushes him from evilness to virtue." Spiritual knowledge is a gift of the Lord's mercy, and Evagrius identifies it with life itself, since human life was intended for knowledge, but God's mercy itself is said by him to be something even better and higher: "The life of the human being is the holy knowledge, whereas God's great mercy is the contemplation [θεωρῶ] of the beings. Now, many wise men of this world have promised us knowledge, but 'God's mercy is better than life.'" (KG 1,73).

Christ's role in the purification of rational creatures in the world to come is made clear by Evagrius in his symbolical interpretation of Christ's miracles, followed by the eventual resurrection of Christ, which in turn symbolises (for Evagrius just as for Origen) the final apokatastasis:

In the aeon to come the bodies of ignorance will be overcome, whereas in that which will be after it the transformation will receive an increment of fire and air, and those who are below will apply themselves to science, if it is true that '*the houses of the impious will receive purification*' and that Christ '*works miracles today and tomorrow, and on the third day is done.*' (KG 3,9)

It is thanks to Christ's work that Evagrius can speak of both Paradise and hell as overcome in the eventual apokatastasis, in the *telos*, which will be participation in the life of the Trinity:

The morning star is the symbol of the saints, whereas the evening star is the symbol of those who are in Sheol. But the *restoration of the orbit of all is the holy Trinity.* (KG 3,60)

What escaped Guillaumont and the other commentators, Evagrius here is thinking of the astronomical meaning of ἀποκατάστασις as a return of all

stars to their original position after the end of a cosmic cycle, a meaning that Evagrius symbolically applies to the eventual restoration of all rational creatures.<sup>488</sup>

This restoration will pass through the liberation of all from evil, so that all can reach the final unity and know it, and can participate in divine life or *θέωσις*: "The coheir of Christ is the one who comes to be in unity and delights in contemplation together with Christ" (*KG* 4,8). The *telos* is described as the knowledge of Unity in *KG* 3,72, which I have already quoted, and also in *KG* 4,18: "The intelligible anointment is the *spiritual knowledge of the holy Unity*, and Christ is the one who is united to this knowledge." Evagrius, like Origen, within the framework of Platonic thought, posits the absolute metaphysical and gnoseological preeminence of the Unity,<sup>489</sup> which characterises both the *arkhē* and the *telos*. This preeminence is evident, for instance, in *KG* 1,19: "the knowledge of the *One* is the knowledge of *that who only is*"; *KG* 3,1–2.11: "The Father, and only he, knows Christ, and the Son, and only he, the Father. The one *qua unique in Unity*, the other *qua Monad and Unity*. Christ is the only one who has the *Unity in himself* and has received the Judgement of rational creatures. The mortal corporeal nature has received Christ's 'Wisdom, full of modalities,' whereas it is not susceptible of Christ himself. But the incorporeal nature both shows the Wisdom of the *Unity* and is susceptible of the *Unity*." Likewise in *KG* 4,21 Christ is again associated with the couple "Monad and Unity": "The anointment either indicates the knowledge of the Unity or denotes the contemplation of beings. Now, if it is true that Christ is anointed more than the others, it is clear that he is anointed in the *knowledge of the Unity*. This is why he only is said to sit to his Father's right, which here, according to the gnostics' norm, indicates the *Monad and the Unity*."

Absolute unity will be the final outcome of apokatastasis, in the *telos*. Then, distinctions of merits, which pertain to the stage of judgements in aeons, will be superseded, because all will have abandoned passions and evil. Therefore, the realisation of a perfect unity of all rational creatures will be possible, when all will participate in divine life (*θέωσις*):<sup>490</sup>

<sup>488</sup> Commentary on this passage in my *Evagrius' Chapters on Knowledge*.

<sup>489</sup> *KG* 2,333. Cf. A. Dempf, "Evagrios Pontikos als Metaphysiker und Mystiker," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 77 (1970) 297–319; G. Bunge, "Hénade ou Monade? Au sujet de deux notions centrales de la terminologie évagrienne," *Le Muséon* 102 (1989) 69–91; Id., "Mysterium Unitatis. Der Gedanke der Einheit von Schöpfer und Geschöpf in der evagrianischen Mystik," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 36 (1989) 449–469; Id., "Encore une fois: Hénade ou Monade?" *Adamantius* 15 (2009) 9–42.

<sup>490</sup> On *θέωσις* in Patristic thought see recently N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the*

In the secondary natural contemplation, some are said to be leaders, and some to be subjected to leaders, according to necessity. But in the *Unity* there will be no leaders, nor (others) submitted to leaders, but *all of them will be gods*. In the knowledge of those which are secondary in their coming into being, different aeons are constituted and indescribable battles are fought. In the *Unity*, however, none of these things will occur; it will be an indescribable *peace*. There will be only pure *intellects* who continually satiate themselves from its *impossibility to satiate*. (KG 4,51 and 1,65)

The last sentence reflects Origen's notion of an absence of *κόρος* in the final apokatastasis and Nyssen's epestatic progress, which is also based on that concept.

Eschatology is closely connected with protology in Evagrius's system, just as it is the case with Origen's and Nyssen's thought. Besides his *Letter to Melania*, it is again his *Kephalaia Gnostica* that develop protological and eschatological reflections. God's first creation was the creation of the so-called "primary beings," that is, intelligent creatures, who originally dwelt in a unity of concord that will be recovered in the end. That unity, which is also described as essential knowledge, was broken because of a differentiation of the intellects' acts of will, as a consequence of which the intellects became souls: "A soul is an intellect that, in its carelessness, has fallen from Unity and, due to its lack of vigilance, has descended to the order of the *praktikē*" (KG 3,28). Speaking of sin and vice as "carelessness" is typically Origenian. Heavy, mortal bodies were thus provided by God for these souls, and this was the second creation, that of "secondary realities," which resulted from the "first judgement," operated by Christ, who divided rational creatures into angels, humans, and demons, in accord with the gravity of their falls.

However, this second creation, for Evagrius just as for Origen, is neither an evil nor a punishment (in KG 3,53 he states that "none of the mortal bodies should be declared to be evil"), but rather a providential strategy excogitated by God in order to help the development and restoration of souls to intellects. It is Christ himself who was the agent of the second creation and of all aeons, each of which—again as in Origen's view as well—is the result of a judgement (KG 2,75: "As many accountable beings the Judge has judged, so many aeons he has also done, and the one who knows the number of judgements also knows the number of aeons"). Indeed, Christ is the creator of the second creation: "The knowledge concerning

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*Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford, 2004); I. Ramelli, "Deification/Theosis," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (Berlin–New York, 2009–). In Evagrius: A. Casiday, "Deification in Origen, Evagrius, and Cassian," in *Origeniana VIII* (Leuven, 2003), 995–2001.

the secondary nature is a spiritual contemplation, that of which Christ availed himself as he *created the nature of bodies and aeons from it* (KG 3,26). Heavy bodies and material creation are not at all evil, but on the contrary they are providential.<sup>491</sup> Christ even assumed one such body, and after his resurrection he had a body that revealed how human risen bodies will be: "Christ to human beings, before his coming, showed an angelic body that had the appearance of a mortal body;"<sup>492</sup> to the last, however, it is not that (spiritual) body which he has now that he has shown, but he has revealed them that which they will have" (KG 4,41). This is why in KG 2,17 Evagrius foresees that "The elimination of the aeons, the abolition of mortal bodies, and the vanishing of names will accompany the knowledge regarding rational creatures, while there will be unanimity of knowledge, in accord with the unanimity of substances," the latter being already a pillar of Origen's polemic against the "Gnostics." Considering mortal bodies as a positive means for intellects to return to God, as Origen also did, Evagrius in KG 4,60 claims that those who hate flesh hate the Creator as well: "To those who curse against the Creator and speak ill of this mortal body of our soul, who will show the grace that they have received, while they are subject to passions, to have been joined to such an instrument? But to witness in favour of my words are those who in visions of dreams are scared by demons, and when they awake they take refuge as among angels, when the mortal body suddenly awakes."<sup>493</sup> Only, mortal bodies will have to disappear when all inherit immortality, not because they are evil, but because they are mortal: "One of the kinds of death has birth as its primary cause; a second comes from the saints against those who do not live in justice, whereas the mother of the third will be remission. Now, if a mortal being is one that is meant by nature to be liberated from the mortal body to which it is joined, an immortal being is one that is not meant by nature to experience this. For *all*

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<sup>491</sup> This has been rightly stressed by Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius Ponticus*, who has offered a short study of how Evagrius treats natural contemplation, Christology, and partially also eschatology in his *Kephalaia Gnostica* (153–177). She opportunely emphasises that, according to Evagrius, the body and sense-perception are part of the ascent to perfection (esp. 27–46).

<sup>492</sup> For this translation see my commentary on this *Kephalaion* in my *Evagrius' Chapters on Knowledge*.

<sup>493</sup> See also 4,62: "It is necessary for the intellect to be instructed either on incorporeal beings or on spiritual bodies, or else to simply see objects. For these things are its life. But it will not see incorporeal realities when it is contaminated in its freewill, nor will it see spiritual bodies when it is deprived of the instrument which shows it sense-perceptible objects. Therefore, what will give to a dead soul for contemplation those who despise the Creator and also disparage our body?"

*those who have been joined to a mortal body will also necessarily be liberated*" (KG 1,58). Likewise in 1,26: "If the human mortal body is a part of this world, and if, on the other hand, 'the form of this world will pass,' it is clear that *the form of the mortal body will also pass.*"

Mortal bodies will disappear in the eventual apokatastasis, when also all evil and all ignorance—which, as I have pointed out, Evagrius closely associates with evil—come to an end:

Just as the first rest of God will reveal the removal of *evil* and the vanishing of *thick bodies*, likewise the second, too, will reveal the vanishing of *bodies*, as *secondary beings*, and the removal of *ignorance*. (KG 3,68)

Now, the removal of evil and ignorance is declared by Evagrius to be a work of Christ, who in Origen, Nyssen, and Evagrius is the main agent of apokatastasis. Indeed, Christ, in his capacity as high priest—a capacity on which Origen had much insisted precisely in respect to apokatastasis<sup>494</sup>—, intercedes for all rational beings and leads them all to salvation by purifying them from evilness and ignorance:

The high priest is the one who, for the sake of the whole rational nature, beseeches God, and *separates some from evil and the others from ignorance*. (KG 5,46)

The "rest of God" mentioned in the above-cited KG 3,68 as the time when the destruction of evil and ignorance will take place is related in turn to the "eighth day," the great Sunday. Like Origen, Didymus, Gregory, and Maximus the Confessor, Evagrius identifies the eighth day with the *telos* and apokatastasis. In KG 4,44 he remarks: "The Sabbath is the rest of the rational soul, in which it is naturally made not to trespass the boundaries of its nature." Now, the rational soul will indeed trespass the boundaries of its creatural nature on the Sunday of the final *θέωσις*. For the seventh day will see the reign of Christ on all *logika*, and on the eighth day, the glorious Sunday, all will return to Unity (cf. 4,26; 5,8). Bodies and souls will be subsumed into intellects; what is inferior will be subsumed into what is superior. As Evagrius states in KG 2,29, the whole of the soul will return to the rank of intellect: "Just as the fire in its power pervades its own body, so will also the intellect in its power pervade the soul, when the whole of it will be mingled with the light of the Holy Trinity."<sup>495</sup> In KG 3,66 Evagrius declares: "Just as the first trumpet

<sup>494</sup> See Ramelli, "The Universal and Eternal Validity."

<sup>495</sup> Indeed, the "pure *nous*" is entirely oriented to the "holy science," i.e. that of the Trinity (2,34). When the *noes* receive contemplation, then the whole nature of the bodies will be eliminated, so that the *θεωρία* concerning them will become immaterial (ibid. 2,62).

revealed the coming into being of bodies, so will also the last trumpet reveal the vanishing of bodies," which will be subsumed into souls, and these into intellects, that is, the superior parts or faculties of souls. Therefore, any plurality, number, and name will disappear along with all aeons (*KG* 1,7–8) and all bodies. After all aeons have passed away, only the absolute eternity or αἰδιότης of life in God will remain (*KG* 2,17, quoted above). Quantity, plurality, and number are attached to secondary beings, what Nyssen would call *diastematic* realities: "One' is a number of quantity. Now, quantity is linked with mortal corporeal nature. Therefore, number is proper to secondary natural contemplation" (*KG* 4,19). Secondary natural contemplation pertains to secondary beings, those of the second creation, but this will be subsumed into the first. Therefore, quantity and number will disappear along with the subsumption of secondary realities into primary realities. This closely reminds one of the cessation of plurality and names, and even of all divine *epinoiai*, described by Evagrius in his *Letter to Melania*, as I have pointed out. Plurality must cease in the *telos*, which will be in fact characterised by unity. This is not at all to say that a confusion will reign—Evagrius himself in his *Letter to Melania* is clear that the Persons of the Trinity will not be confused, nor will there be a confusion between the Creator and the creatures—, but rather a unity of concord, as it was also conceived by Origen.

Evagrius—not only like Origen, and not only like all Platonists, but like most educated people in the imperial age—displays a decided dualism between the intelligible and the sense-perceptible worlds,<sup>496</sup> but, like Origen and in an anti-Gnostic and anti-Manichaean perspective, he is far from seeing the latter as evil, as I have mentioned. Rather, he considers it to be providential, an instrument of instruction, elevation, and salvation. In *KG* 6,17, too, Evagrius distinguishes the incorporeal nature from the corporeal one, and, provided that we can trust the accuracy of the Syriac translation (for in Syriac there are two different words for "body," one referring to heavy, thick bodies, and the other also including finer and incorruptible bodies),<sup>497</sup> this distinction seems to be absolute: there are beings that are corporeal, i.e. endowed with any kind of body, thicker or finer, and there are realities that are absolutely incorporeal, i.e. without any kind of body, either fine or thick. Now, in *KG* 6,20 God is said to have created first the first creation, that of incorporeal realities, and then the second, that of bodies,

<sup>496</sup> Some examples from his *Kephalaia Gnostica*, in their non-expurgated version, are 1,33; 2,35; 4,12; 5,2; 6,2–3; 6, 38–40.

<sup>497</sup> See my commentary in *Evagrius' Chapters on Knowledge*.



which came after the “movement” of rational creatures, that is, after they began to direct their wills in different directions, instead of orienting them only toward the Good, i.e., God: “Before the ‘movement,’ God was good, powerful, wise, *creator of incorporeal realities, Father of rational beings*, and omnipotent; after the ‘movement,’ God has become *creator of bodies*, judge, ruler, physician, shepherd, doctor, merciful and patient, and moreover door, way, lamb, high priest, etc.” God’s *epinoia* of physician of souls is particularly emphasised by Evagrius,<sup>498</sup> due to its role in the process of apokatastasis. As I have remarked earlier on the basis of the Letter to Melania, divine *epinoiai*,<sup>499</sup> just as the corporeal creation, for Evagrius are only useful for the sake of the salvific economy; this is why they will not need to subsist in the end. Similarly, neither will the secondary creation need to subsist in the end. The first creation, that of incorporeal realities, is separated from the second also in *KG* 4,58 (“God, while creating rational creatures, was not even in anything, whereas while creating the corporeal nature and the aeons that derive from it, was in his Christ”) and 3,19, where the ontological distinction brings about a parallel gnoseological distinction: “The primary and the secondary contemplations have in common the fact that they have a bare seer, but they have as a property the fact that the one is immaterial, while the other one is in matter.” The same distinction between two kinds of knowledge and two kinds of creation is kept in *KG* 3,24.26: “The knowledge of the *primary nature* is a spiritual contemplation, that of which the Creator availed himself in creating the *intellects*, which only are susceptible of his nature. The knowledge concerning the *secondary nature* is a spiritual contemplation, that of which Christ availed himself in creating the nature of *bodies* and *aeons* from it.”

The succession of aeons, just like bodies, belongs to the second creation and will vanish in the absolute eternity of apokatastasis (which is not αἰώ-νιος, but ἀἰδῖος). God’s science or knowledge produced primary beings, i.e. intellectual realities; secondary beings, bodies, only came after the aforementioned “movement” of rational creatures’ free wills: “All that which has come into existence has come into existence thanks to God’s knowledge. But some of these existing beings are primary beings, and some are secondary. And (divine) knowledge is more ancient than primary beings, and

<sup>498</sup> E.g. in *Ep.* 42; 51; 52; 55; 57; 63; Λογισμοί 3. See Konstantinovsky, *Evagrius*, 112–113. The very idea that the divine Physician applies drastic remedies if necessary for the salvation of the soul (Λογισμοί 10) comes straight from Origen.

<sup>499</sup> Note again that Evagrius, exactly like Nyssen, regards these *epinoiai* as belonging to God the Trinity, and not only to Christ.

movement (is more ancient) than secondary beings" (*KG* 1,50). Moses' account of creation in Genesis, according to Evagrius, only refers to secondary creation, which took place after the Judgement of fallen rational creatures, whereas there exists no account of primary creation: "Some among the beings came to existence before the Judgement, and some after it. And regarding the former, nobody has given an account. Regarding the latter, on the other hand, the one who was on the Horeb offered a description," Moses (*KG* 2,64).

The second creation, like all that which was not from the beginning, will disappear in the end, in the eventual apokatastasis, not because it is evil, but because it will be subsumed into what is superior (a trait of which Eriugena will be reminiscent<sup>500</sup>). Apokatastasis thus appears to be the restoration of creatures to the best: "If it is true that the perfection of the intellect is immaterial knowledge, as it is said, and immaterial knowledge is only the Trinity, it is clear that in perfection nothing of matter will remain. And if this is so, the intellect, finally bare, will become a seer of the Trinity" (*KG* 3,15). The contemplation of the Trinity clearly is much higher than material knowledge.

The eventual apokatastasis is seen by Evagrius, just as by Origen and especially by Gregory of Nyssa, as the restoration of the divine image in the human being, which had fallen and become blurred because of sin, and whose own seat is the intellect. Thus, in *Gnostikos* 50 Evagrius exhorts his reader in the following way: "Always endeavour to depict the images [εἰκόνας] by looking at the Archetype [ἀρχέτυπον], without omitting any of the factors that contribute to the *reconstitution of the fallen* [ἐκπεσοῦσαν] *image*."<sup>501</sup> For Evagrius, indeed, just as for Origen and Nyssen, what in the human being is in the image of God is eminently the intellect, not the body or the inferior faculties of the soul, since God is incorporeal and free from passions, and the intellect is the only human faculty that is susceptible of the knowledge of God. From *KG* 6,73 it is clear that the image of God is the intellect, "gnosis," and the capacity to receive God through "essential knowledge": "The intellect is in the image of God not because it is incorporeal, but because it was created susceptible of God; on the other hand, if it is an image of God in that it is incorporeal, then it is essential knowledge, and it is not on account of its receptivity that it was made in the image of God. But

<sup>500</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on Eriugena.

<sup>501</sup> Edition: Évangile le Pontique, *Le gnostique, ou À celui qui est devenu digne de la science*, éd. critique des fragments grecs, tr. établie au moyen des versions syriaques et arménienne, comm. par A.&C. Guillaumont, Sources Chrétiennes 356 (Paris, 1989).

consider whether the fact of *being incorporeal and that of being susceptible of knowledge are not the same thing*, or differently, as is the case with a statue and with the bronze that constitutes it.” The ‘zetetic’ method used in this passage reminds readers of Origen’s method; first Evagrius presents an explanation for the intellect’s characterisation as “image of God,” then he presents another explanation, which apparently excludes the former, but finally he shows that both may in fact be compatible. A further clarification comes from *KG* 3,32: “The image of God is not that which is susceptible of God’s Wisdom, for in this way the mortal corporeal nature, too, would be the image of God. But that which is susceptible of the Unity is the image of God.” In *Sent.* 58 Evagrius, deeply reminiscent of Origen and in full accord with Nyssen as well, identifies the essence, the true identity of the human being, or better of each rational creature, with what it was at the beginning, in the ἀρχή, in God’s own plan, before its fall: “If you want to know yourself, who you are, do not consider who you have been, but *who you were at the beginning*.” What rational creatures were in the ἀρχή, before their fall, will be restored in the end, in the eventual apokatastasis, when their soul has become entirely pure—that is, pure from passions.

Evagrius shares the ideal of *apatheia*—the goal of the *praktikē*—with Clement, Origen, and Nyssen.<sup>502</sup> He insists on this point, because it is closely related to knowledge and intellectual activity, in his view, for instance in *Kephalaia Practica* 56.67: “We shall say that the *absence of passions* is the health of the soul, and that its nourishment is *knowledge*. *Impassivity* is possessed by the soul that not only does not suffer for the things that happen, but remains imperturbable even at their memory.” Freedom from passions, indeed, is so important in that it allows for contemplation, for the intellectual activity: “It is not to everyone that it is proper to say, ‘Have my soul go out of prison,’ but to those who, because of the purity of their soul, can, even without this mortal body, get close to the contemplation of beings” (*KG* 4,70). An analogous connection between *apatheia* and knowledge, the former on the ethical plane and the latter on the intellectual one, is drawn by Evagrius in *KG* 6,55 and 1,81: “It is then that the intellect approaches the *intelligible* realities: when it does not unite itself any longer

<sup>502</sup> See J. Driscoll, “*Apatheia* and Purity of Heart in Evagrius,” in *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature*, ed. H.A. Luckman–L. Kulzer (Collegeville, MN 1999), 141–159; R. Somos, “Origen, Evagrius Ponticos and the Ideal of Impassivity,” in *Origeniana VII* (Leuven, 1999), 365–373; Corrigan, *Evagrius and Gregory*, Ch. 4; M. Tobon, “The Health of the Soul: *Apatheia* in Evagrius Ponticus,” *Studia Patristica* 47 (2010) 187–202; Suzuki, “The Evagrian Concept of *Apatheia*.”

to tempting thoughts coming from the *passionate* part of the soul. The glory and the light of the intellect is *knowledge*, whereas the glory and the light of the soul is *impassivity*." The last example is the most striking of all, since it postulates the creative power of the intellect when it is free from passions, so that its knowledge becomes completely independent of sense-perception: "The intellect that has *liberated itself from passions* and sees the intellections of beings does not truly receive any more the representations that (are formed) by means of sense-perceptions, but it is as though *another world were created by its knowledge*, attracted its thought to itself, and rejected the sense-perceptible world far from itself" (KG 5,12). This notion I have already pointed out in Evagrius's Letter to Melania as well. That virtues and *apatheia*—the domain of the *praktikē*—are the prerequisite of knowledge is pithily confirmed by *Schol. in Prov.* 258: the soul is "the mother of the intellect" because "by means of *virtues*, it brings *the intellect* to light."

In Evagrius's thought, just as in Gregory Nyssen's, the ideal of *apatheia* is closely related to the conception of passions as adventitious in rational creatures, secondary, and against nature: "If all the faculties that we have in common with animals belong to the corporeal nature, it is evident that the irascible and the appetitive faculties *do not seem to have been created together* with the rational nature before the movement," that is, the movement of will that determined the fall; "Not all the thoughts prevent the intellect from knowing God, but only those which assault it from the irascible and the appetitive parts, and which are *against nature*" (KG 6,85.83). This is why, since passions were not at the beginning—being not included in God's plan for rational creatures—, they will not subsist in the end. However, in KG 3,59 Evagrius observes that what is against nature are not the inferior faculties of the soul, but their bad use, that is, their use against nature, since it is from this that evilness derives: "If all evilness is generated by the intellect, by the irascible faculty, and by the appetitive one, and of these faculties it is possible to make use in a good and an evil way, then it is clear that it is *for the use of these faculties against nature* that evils occur to us. And if this is so, there is nothing that has been created by God and is evil."

If *πάθη* are against nature and must be eradicated, what about love, whose important role in apokatastasis I have elucidated? Evagrius, like Origen and Nyssen,<sup>503</sup> thinks that *ἀγάπη* is no *πάθος*. On the contrary, *ἀγάπη*, which

<sup>503</sup> N. Gendle, "Cappadocian Elements in the Mystical Theology of Evagrius," in *Studia Patristica* 16,2 (Berlin, 1985), 373–384.

leads to wisdom<sup>504</sup> and is the only movement that will remain in *epektasis*, derives from impassivity, as is clear from *Praktikos* 81: “ἀγάπη is the product of impassivity”; *ibid.* 35: “bodily passions are overcome by continence; those of the soul are overcome by spiritual love [ἀγάπη πνευματική]”; *ibid.* 84: “The end of asceticism [πρακτική] is love; that of knowledge is the doctrine on God, and the principles of both are faith and natural contemplation.” Thus, in *KG* 5,29 and 4,50 as well, Evagrius claims that “the intellect, when it approaches the intellections of beings, will be full of spiritual desire and will never detach itself from admiration,” and that “There is one good kind of *love*, which is forever: that which true *knowledge* elects, and it is said to be *inseparable from the intellect*.” Indeed, “Love is the perfect state of the rational soul, a state in which the soul cannot love anything which is among corruptible beings more than the knowledge of God” (*KG* 1,86). The link between love and knowledge could not be clearer.

Evagrius, exactly like Origen, shows a pastoral concern in respect to the divulgation of the doctrine of apokatastasis, especially among spiritually immature people, who do good out of fear and not for love. It is better for such persons to believe in threats of eternal punishments, in order for them to keep their fear, which prevents them from sinning. Thus, in *Gnostikos* 36 he remarks that “the loftier doctrine [ὁ ὑψηλότερος λόγος] concerning the Judgement should be kept undisclosed to secular people and young people.” Indeed, for Evagrius, just as for Origen, fear of punishments as a deterrent from doing evil is typical of scarcely mature people (*KP* 70): “Those who have established virtues in themselves and have entirely mixed to them can no longer remember *laws*, commandments, or *punishment* [χολάσεως], but say and do all that which the best disposition advises.” Not fear, but virtue should induce to do good; and virtue is primarily love and mercy, which are also the main features of God, the model of all virtues (*KP* 75). In *Gnost.* 48 Evagrius cites with great veneration an exhortation of Didymus the Blind on the necessity of meditating God’s judgement and God’s Providence:

Always exercise yourself in the meditation of the doctrines concerning Providence and Judgement—said Didymus, the great ‘gnostic’ teacher [ὁ μέγας καὶ γκωστικός διδάσκαλος Δίδυμος]—and endeavour to remember their materials, since almost all people err in these topics. As for the rationale of Judgement,

<sup>504</sup> Cf. *KG* 3,58: “Whoever has to see things that are written needs light; whoever has to *learn* the wisdom of the beings needs spiritual *love*.” See my “Love” in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico*, ed. A. Di Berardino, English edition (forthcoming from InterVarsity).

you will find that this lies in the variety of bodies and worlds; that concerning Providence, instead, lies in the turns that *from evilness and ignorance bring us back to virtue or knowledge* [ἐν τοῖς τρόποις τοῖς ἀπὸ κακίας καὶ ἀγνώστιας ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἢ ἐπὶ τὴν γνῶσιν].

Indeed, Evagrius never separates the idea of the Judgement, with the retribution of rational creatures' deeds and passions or virtues,<sup>505</sup> from that of God's Providence, which is prior to that of the Judgement, because it was anterior to the fall, which brought about the necessity of the Judgement: "The various movements and different passions of rational creatures have compelled by force the intellections concerning Providence to be seen in an obscure way, whereas their different orders have made the intellections concerning the Judgement concealed. *The rationale concerning the Judgement is secondary*, as has been said, *vis-à-vis that concerning movement and that concerning Providence*" (KG 5,23–24). That God's Judgement is inseparable from God's Providence is also clear from *Schol. 8 in Ps. 138*,<sup>16</sup> where also the *logoi* of Providence and Judgement are joined. Providence cares for the spiritual therapy of rational creatures and operates on their intellects, which take care of their own souls (KP 82). Such a therapy is salvific (KG 1,28<sup>506</sup>). Evagrius, indeed, is exactly along Origen's lines in thinking that divine providence, which is universally salvific, is not in the least at odds with individual free will, but divine justice rewards each one according to his or her deeds, and divine providence operates at the same time, always allowing each one's will to be free: "God's Providence accompanies the freedom of will, whereas God's Judgement takes into consideration the order of rational creatures" (KG 6,43). Divine providence operates both keeping God's creatures into existence—since, without divine grace, none could either exist or continue to exist—and converting rational creatures to the Good or knowledge of the Good:

God's Providence is double: on the one hand, it is said to *preserve* the existence of bodies and incorporeal realities; on the other hand, to push rational creatures *from evilness and ignorance to virtue and knowledge*. The first knowledge to be found in rational creatures is that of the Holy Trinity; then, there occurred the movement of free will, *Providence, which rescues and never*

<sup>505</sup> Se, e.g., KG 4,33; 4,38; 6,57.

<sup>506</sup> "Among an abundance of ways, the ways that lead to salvation are three, namely, those which have in common the destruction of sins. Now, two of them have as a property the capacity to deliver from passions, whereas the virtue of the third is that it will also be cause of glory. Indeed, glory follows the one, and psalmody the other one, and exaltation again the other one."

*abandons anyone, and then the Judgement, and again the movement of free will, Providence, the Judgement, and so on with all this up to the Holy Trinity. Thus, every Judgement comes between the movement of free will and divine Providence.* (KG 6,59.75)

Aeons, which are the result of each Judgement, come after the first movement of rational creatures' free will and their fall, but come before the final and most perfect manifestation of God's Providence, which will be apokatastasis, after the end of all aeons. Then, not only for Origen, but for Evagrius as well, no one will be in any aeon any more, but God will be "all in all." Indeed, Evagrius thinks of apokatastasis in terms of *θέωσις* to the point of calling it "the Holy Trinity" outright.

Evagrius, remarkably, uses the same Scriptural passage as Gregory of Nyssa did to establish that otherworldly punishments will come to an end after "the full payment of one's debt": the parable in Matt 18:23–25 and Luke 7:41. In Gregory's *De anima et resurrectione* 101–104, Macrina understands Jesus's words on the payment of one's debt "up to the last coin" as a proof of the fact that, when the last coin has been paid, the relevant punishment and imprisonment will cease: "God's right Judgement is applied to all, and extends the time of restitution of the debt according to its amount [...] the complete repayment of debts does not take place through a money payment, but the debtor is handed to the torturers, until he has paid his whole debt [...] through the necessary suffering, he will eliminate the debt, accumulated by means of participation in miserable things, which he had taken upon himself during his earthly life [...] after taking off all that which is alien to himself, i.e. sin, and getting rid of the shame deriving from debts, he can achieve a condition of freedom and confidence. Now, freedom is assimilation to what has no master and is endowed with absolute power, and at the beginning it was given us by God, but then it was covered and hidden by the shame of debts. Thus, as a consequence, everything that is free will adapt to what is similar to it; but virtue admits of no masters:<sup>507</sup> therefore, everything that is free will turn out to be in virtue, since what is free has no master. Now, God's nature is the source of all virtue; so, in it there will be those who have attained freedom from evil, that, as the Apostle says, 'God may be all in all' (1 Cor 15:28).<sup>508</sup> The same parable is adduced by Evagrius in KG 4,34, who offers of it the same eschatological interpretation as Gregory Nyssen does:

<sup>507</sup> Plato *Resp.* 617E.

<sup>508</sup> See my "Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 313–356.

In the future world no one will escape from the house of torment into which he will fall. For it is said: "You will not go out from there *until you have given back the very last coin*," that is, up to the smallest amount of suffering.

Nevertheless, after giving back the very last coin, and the last, even infinitesimal, amount of suffering, all will abandon the house of torment. This parable, indeed, constitutes for both Nyssen and Evagrius—and Diodore and Theodore (see below)—a biblical foundation of apokatastasis. Another is 1 Tim 2:4–6, which Evagrius quotes in *Gnost.* 22 linking it to an eschatology that is clearly oriented to apokatastasis:

The 'gnostic' must be neither sad nor hostile; for the former attitude is proper to those who do not know what Scriptures say concerning that which is to happen; the latter, of those who do not want *all humans to be saved and reach the knowledge of truth*.

Knowing what Scripture reveals concerning the *telos* necessarily brings joy, according to Evagrius, and this clearly because Scripture does announce the eventual apokatastasis, which in 1 Tim 2:4–6 is moreover presented as "what God wants." This conviction, that apokatastasis is revealed by the Bible, was shared by all Patristic supporters of this doctrine, especially Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. They would have never adhered to this view if they had not deemed it solidly grounded in Scripture. Hence their profound persuasion, which I have pointed out, that the final restoration depends first of all on Christ.

It is ultimately on the basis of his radical metaphysical and eschatological optimism that Evagrius exhorts his disciples to hope, joy, and confidence.<sup>509</sup> In *Pract.* 20 and 25–26, on the contrary, Evagrius warns against wrath, hatred, affliction, and memory of suffered injuries. Likewise, in *Pract.* 27–28 he warns against sadness and lack of confidence and hope in God.<sup>510</sup> Evagrius's own metaphysical, theological, and eschatological optimism was the very opposite of this, and he is clear that lacking hope in God's Providence is a

<sup>509</sup> Cf., e.g. *KP* 12.

<sup>510</sup> On Evagrius's psychology see, e.g., D. Allen, "Ascetic Theology and Psychology," in *Limning the Psyche* (Grand Rapids, 1997), 297–316. On ἀκαθάρτια in Evagrius see R. Brague, "L'image et l'acédie. Remarques sur le premier Apophtegme," *Revue Thomiste* 85 (1985) 197–228; G. Bunge, *Akedia: die geistliche Lehre des Evagrius Pontikos vom Überdruß* (Köln, 1989<sup>3</sup>; Würzburg, 1995<sup>5</sup>); R. Augst, *Lebensverwirklichung und christlicher Glaube, Acedia, religiöse Gleichgültigkeit als Problem der Spiritualität bei Evagrius Ponticus* (Frankfurt a.M., 1990); C. Joest, "Die Bedeutung von Akedia und Apatheia bei Evagrius Pontikos," *Studia Monastica* 35.1 (1993) 7–53; English translation in *Benedictine Review* 55.2–3 (2004), 121–150, 273–307; B. Maier, "Apatheia bei den Stoikern und Akedia bei Evagrius Pontikos: ein Ideal und die Kehrseite seiner Realität," *Oriens Christianus* 78 (1994) 230–249.



serious sin, a yielding to the devil (*Pract.* 46–47). This position, as I shall show in a moment, was shared by Diodore of Tarsus, another supporter of the apokatastasis theory.

Evagrius's protological and eschatological thought shows deep correspondences with those of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. This is not accidental, since he absorbed Origen's and the Cappadocians' thought, as well as that of Didymus, and I suspect that his closeness to Nyssen—both biographical and intellectual—is more remarkable than is commonly assumed. I have offered some proofs, and I have already mentioned Corrigan's insightful study, but a methodical investigation in this respect seems to be still an important desideratum. Moreover, the close intellectual relationship between Evagrius and Origen and Nyssen is far from being limited to protology and eschatology, but invests most aspects of his thought.

One of the theologians who are closest to Origen's and the Cappadocians' non-deterministic notion of apokatastasis, based on, and not excluding, human freedom, is the orthodox<sup>511</sup> archimandrite Sophronius Sacharov,<sup>512</sup> whose soteriology presents many convergences with the thought of Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Evagrius. Like Origen, and then John of Dalyatha, he thinks that the Biblical *πῦρ αἰώνιον* is “the heavenly flame that consumes our deathly passions [...] in our fallen state burning must precede enlightenment [...] let us therefore bless the Lord for the consuming action of his love” (p. 10). He displays Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's notion of the “skin tunics.”<sup>513</sup> One must pass through very narrow gates in order to liberate oneself from the “skin tunics” that came after the fall. The very idea of passing through a narrow passage that removes the incrustations of sin over one's soul is the same as is found in Gregory of Nyssa's *De anima et resurrectione*.<sup>514</sup> With the same Fathers, Sophronius upheld the ideal of *apatheia*.<sup>515</sup> Fear of

<sup>511</sup> On eschatology in the Orthodox church see A. Louth, “Eastern Orthodox Eschatology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. J.L. Walls (Oxford, 2007), 233–247.

<sup>512</sup> Born in Russia (22.ix.1896), he studied fine arts in Moscow, then became a monk on Mt. Athos, where his spiritual guide was starez Silvanus (†1938), whose writings he also published, and who was canonised. His last years were spent in England, where he died in 1993. Unless differently specified, I shall cite from his *On Prayer*, ed. R. Edmonds (Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, Essex, 1996); WSS = *We Shall See Him As He Is*, tr. R. Edmonds (ibid., 2004<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>513</sup> See I. Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, 218–219; A.C. Lund Jacobsen, “Genesis 1–3 as Source for the Anthropology of Origen,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 72,3 (2008) 213–232.

<sup>514</sup> One “Must go through very “strait gates” in order to rid himself of the ‘coats of skin’ with which he was clothed after the fall,” p. 29. See my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa Sull'anima*.

<sup>515</sup> “Pride is the root of all evil, in pride lie death and darkness. But holy *apatheia* means humility,” p. 51. “Pride is the root of spiritual disaster; through pride we become like demons.

God is compatible with *apatheia*, since it is not a passion; Origen and Gregory of Nyssa also maintained this, insisting that it is necessary to adhere to the Good for love and not out of fear.<sup>516</sup> The same is held true by Sophronius: God "creates gods like himself, and our whole being bows before him, not in dread before his stern master, but in humble love for the Father" (p. 39).

His love is humble, He loves us not condescendingly but tenderly, *as a mother* aches over her sick baby [...] Divine love is the intrinsic essence of eternity [...] embracing the whole of creation in infinite *compassion* for all that exists (p. 14). The Lord took *pity* of my ignorance and was not angry at my temerity, but *like a mother* had *compassion* on me and was quick to respond. And this not once, but over and over again (p. 35).

Universal resurrection and salvation was a matter of the highest concern to Sophronius. This compassion is intimate participation, and hell is that of human passions (another equation that was already drawn by Origen).<sup>517</sup> Hell is a negative state which is paradoxically necessary for the liberation from it; this liberation gives life, light, and the desire for liberating every creature from hell.<sup>518</sup> Spiritual progress starts from a descent to hell, an imitation of Christ's *descensus ad inferos* (an important element whose connection with the doctrine of apokatastasis I have already highlighted).<sup>519</sup> Christ's life embraces the extremes of suffering and the culmination of blessedness, as Gregory Nyssen also said when commenting on the universal extension of Christ's cross as a sign of the universal extension of God's providence, which, as Clement already declared, includes hell itself. Sophronius indeed proclaims that divine love encompasses even hell.<sup>520</sup> Hell is necessary for repentance, but it is illuminated by God's light; it is a mystery. Divine plenitude embraces all, and we humans shall be as God is, which is of course reminiscent of Patristic *θέωσις*.<sup>521</sup> At the end of time, humans will dwell in god's stability, and this is really the eternal rest (WSS, 62–63). Sophronius

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Humble love is natural to God, bringing redemption for them that are fallen away from the Kingdom of the Heavenly Father" (p. 88); cf. WSS, p. 20. On humility in Patristics see my "Umiltà," in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, dir. A. Di Berardino, vol. 3 (Genoa, 2008), 5497–5506. Cfr. WSS, p. 132.

<sup>516</sup> Cf. WSS, p. 21.

<sup>517</sup> "Praying for those in hell, the hell of passions, he himself experiences that infernal state," p. 109; "He prays for others as for himself, since their life has now merged with his. He repents for himself and for them. He prays for remission of sins for all of us. His repentance becomes repentance for the whole world, for all mankind," p. 110.

<sup>518</sup> WSS, 45; 47. Cf. WSS, 53. Love can heal human nature infected by the poison of the devil.

<sup>519</sup> WSS, 66–67; 129.

<sup>520</sup> WSS, 77–79. Cf. 137; 154.

<sup>521</sup> WSS, 60–61; 149, with a quotation of 1 John 3:2. Cf. WSS, 234–235; 170.

is clear that there is no situation in which God cannot save. Love, passing through earthly death, defeats death eternally and makes the human being a heir of the Kingdom that cannot be subverted. Christians who are spiritually advanced pray for the whole world, the whole “Adam.” Like Gregory of Nyssa, Sophronius saw humanity as a ὅλον φύραμα, and insists on the consubstantiality of all humanity.<sup>522</sup> He sees human nature as a multi-hypostatic nature, just like divine nature: one and the same nature with many (or Three) hypostases in a correspondence that was highlighted by Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>523</sup> This unity is manifested in the presence of God’s image in every human, which can be obscured, but—as Origen and Gregory Nyssen thought—can never be cancelled and can always be restored.<sup>524</sup>

Silvanus, Sophronius’s master, was particularly concerned about the salvation of all: he prayed for the whole world as for himself, and his soul was in constant contemplation of hell (WSS, 105; cf. 107–108).<sup>525</sup> In the second part of his work on prayer, devoted to the prayer to Jesus, the invocation almost always includes the prayer for the salvation of the whole world. Like the Fathers, he also embraced the ideal of *apatheia*, without which salvation and θέωσις is impossible.<sup>526</sup> Salvation is always possible, even in the other world—an idea that was typical of Clement, Origen, Nyssen, and their followers—it is up to us whether to accept or refuse God’s gift of love, and this not only in the present life, but in eternity. One might say that he does not want this gift, but mighty are the hands of the living God; his love is stronger than death; nothing will be impossible for God. What is impossible for the human beings is not impossible for God. The argument, so much insisted upon here, is that of the omnipotence of God that Origen used in order to correct Plato on the universality of salvation: nothing is impossible for the Omnipotent; no being is incurable for the One who created it. Another argument is added: Christ’s suffering covers all human evils, from Adam’s sin onward.<sup>527</sup> This was also forcefully argued by Origen: *manere qui-*

<sup>522</sup> WSS, 71–72; 201; 208. That love overcomes death is repeated on p. 127.

<sup>523</sup> WSS, 216; 225; 230. “The being of all mankind, in its source and by its nature, is *one* being, *one* man. Hence the ‘natural’ impulse of our spirit to pray for *all* people, for *all* Adam, as for oneself. So do we interpret Christ’s words, ‘That they all may be one, as We are one’” (57). God the Father will not judge anyone; the Son will, because he is human; the saints will judge the world (43–44).

<sup>524</sup> 84; 109: “Education consists in restoring to the descendants of Adam the image of Christ that was destroyed in the fall.”

<sup>525</sup> WSS, 113–114.

<sup>526</sup> WSS, 115–117; cf. 126: salvation understood as deification.

<sup>527</sup> “The soul stands before the Last Judgement, and the more shattering her fear of sentence, the more urgent her prayer of repentance” (52); “With men it is impossible, but not

*dem naturae rationabili semper liberum arbitrium non negamus, sed tantam esse uim crucis Christi [...] quae ad sanitatem et remedium non solum praesentis et futuri, sed etiam praeteritorum saeculorum, et non solum humano huic nostro ordini, sed etiam caelestibus uirtutibus ordinibusque sufficiat.*

Sophronius observes that "hell was vexed, for it was overturned" (111). Matt 22:14 and 20:16, "those called are many, but the elect are few," is not interpreted as a reference to an arbitrary election by God, impossible for humans to understand, but as a reference to human free will.<sup>528</sup> Sophronius—like the Platonic Fathers who embraced ethical intellectualism—is pretty sure that a choice against the Good, i.e. God, would not be free, because it would be the result of ignorance.<sup>529</sup> That salvation depends on Christ, who opens paths over hell's abyss, is considered to be the gist of the Fathers' teaching, with which Sophronius was well acquainted.<sup>530</sup> Not even hell marks a definitive perdition.<sup>531</sup> Silvanus said that the Lord taught him to keep his mind in hell without despairing.<sup>532</sup> Like Origen, Eusebius, Nyssen, and other Origenians, Sophronius too bases the universalistic *telos* on 1 Cor 15:28: that God will be "all in all" means that every being endowed with

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with God, for with God all things are possible" (114); "It depends on us whether to accept or reject His gift of love, and this not only when we are in this life, but, more especially, in eternity also [...] I may say, 'I don't want this gift'—*but strong are the hands of the Living God* [...] His love was stronger than death" (59). "Be of good cheer, He said [...] with God nothing shall be impossible" (54). "Be of good cheer [...] I have overcome the world" (75). "The Lord suffered for everyone of us. His sufferings do indeed cover all our ills since the fall of Adam" (77). This corresponds to Origen's assertion of the universal and eternal validity of Jesus's Cross.

<sup>528</sup> "Our Creator knows better than we do the ultimate possibilities of our nature [...] Many are called, but few are chosen: God addresses the call to all of us, but the response depends on us," 83.

<sup>529</sup> "It seems absolutely clear to us that all those who for whatever reason reject Christ *do not know* What and Whom they are rejecting," 85. Sophronius adduces Luke 23:34a; in favour of its authenticity see my "Luke 23:34a: A Case against its Athetesis," *Sileno* 36 (2010) 233–247. N. Eubank, "A Disconcerting Prayer," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129 (2010) 521–536, also favours the authenticity.

<sup>530</sup> WSS, 122–123; cf. 130–131. "Kingdoms pretending to the name of Christian, and their peoples, have worn the mask of piety, while denying the power thereof," 61. "In the coming age the hierarchy of this world, both ecclesiastical and social, may find themselves overturned [...] Spiritual elders need not necessarily be priests or monks [...] numerous ascetics, endowed with grace, shunned priesthood and monasticism," 98. This is close to Origen's idea of a visible and an invisible church, the latter made of those who are really worthy of being presbyters, bishops, etc. See my "Tit 2:2–4 and a Patristic Interpretation," forthcoming. Cf. WSS, 22: "A great many of us frequent churches erected by man, but relatively few find the 'narrow way' which leads to the heavenly tabernacle not made by hands."

<sup>531</sup> WSS, 80–81. He quotes Rom 8:35–39, WSS, 83, on the impossibility that anything may separate us from God.

<sup>532</sup> WSS, 132; repeated on p. 236 in the Epilogue.

reason has to become perfect, according to the image of God; the hope is given that the eternal day will come in which God will be “all in all.”<sup>533</sup> Sophronius echoes Christ’s words: I shall not absolutely reject those who come to me (WSS, 128); God gives graces to humans without their deserving them.<sup>534</sup> Only, Sophronius warns that the doctrine of universal salvation must not be divinely deterministic (WSS, 109) in such a way as to cancel human freedom. Neither was it so in Origen.

*Philoxenus and Babai.*

*Authentic and Interpolated Versions of Evagrius’s Works?*

As I have mentioned, Evagrius’s works enjoyed an extensive diffusion in the Syriac world, even more than the work of the three Cappadocian Fathers did.<sup>535</sup> Indeed, they were even spread up to central Asia. Against this backdrop, it comes as no surprise that Philoxenus of Mabbug († 523), the first Syriac author who appears to be influenced by Evagrius, in a letter that is probably authentic states that he has made a *pussaqa*—that is, a translation or commentary—of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*. Which is, however, the recension in which he knew the *Kephalaia Gnostica*?<sup>536</sup> This is an important question that remains open.

Philoxenus’s *pussaqa* seems to be lost, at least so far. An outstanding commentator on Evagrius was another Syriac author, Babai the Great (ca. 551–638), the most remarkable Eastern Syriac writer and thinker between the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century and a member of the reformed monastic movement. He received his education at the School of Nisibis, which at that time was directed by Abraham of Beth Rabban.<sup>537</sup> Babai was the direct disciple of Abraham of Kashkar, who, when the

<sup>533</sup> WSS, 108; 189. Cf. 186; 197.

<sup>534</sup> WSS, 181. Origen also was convinced that the eventual apokatastasis will be due to the grace of God and not to anyone’s merits.

<sup>535</sup> And yet the diffusion and influence of their works was remarkable. I limit myself to referring readers to D.G.K. Taylor, “Les Pères cappadociens dans la tradition syriaque,” in *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque*, eds. A. Schmidt–D. Gonnet (Paris, 2007), 43–61.

<sup>536</sup> J.W. Watt, “Philoxenus and the Old Syriac Version of Evagrius’ *Centuries*,” *Oriens Christianus* 64 (1980) 65–81.

<sup>537</sup> On which see A. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom. The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia, 2006); I. Ramelli, “Linee introduttive a Barhadbeshabba di Halwan, Causa della fondazione delle scuole: filosofia e storia della filosofia greca e cristiana in Barhadbeshabba,” *Ilu* 9 (2004) 127–181; “Barhadbeshabba di Halwan, Causa della fondazione delle scuole,” translation from the

school fell under the directorship of Hnana of Adiabene, who had the reputation of an Origenist, founded a monastery on Mt. Ibla. Babai stayed there for a while; then, after the death of Abraham (588), he founded another monastery, but in 604 he became the abbot of the monastery on Mt. Ibla, and later obtained a kind of patriarchal authority over the Eastern Syriac church, the so-called "Nestorian" church.<sup>538</sup> However, when he was finally elected patriarch-*katholikos*, he declined and died shortly after. Babai, who attacked "miaphysite" Christology and commented on the Bible in the footsteps of Theodore of Mopsuestia, read Evagrius in Syriac; it is not even certain that he knew Greek at all. A shortened version of his original, longer, and lost commentary on Evagrius's *Kephalaia Gnostica* is found in an eighth-century manuscript that also includes the text of Evagrius himself. This work, and all of Evagrius, was particularly important for the monks of Mt. Ibla and for Syriac monasticism in general.

Now, it is important to observe that Evagrius's work and thought, moreover in his most speculative oeuvre, was not only commented on by Babai, but also significantly altered.<sup>539</sup> In his commentary on Evagrius's *Kephalaia Gnostica*, Babai inserted a telling introduction in which he sets out to defend Evagrius against any accusation of Origenism. Although Evagrius's thought follows and elaborates Origen's true thought, Babai, clearly because of the radicalisation and deviations of the Origenists of his own time, aims at detaching Evagrius's thought from that of Origen. To this end, he explains that two versions of the *Kephalaia Gnostica* were circulating, one authentic and the other altered. This is correct, and has been indeed confirmed by the groundbreaking analyses of Guillaumont (although some details need to be corrected in his approach to Evagrius). But Babai takes for authentic the version (S') that, according to Guillaumont, is expurgated and liberated from points that seemed too close to Origenism (Guillaumont<sup>540</sup> suggested that Philoxenus was the translator of this version, but Watt argued that this version was in fact anterior to Philoxenus;<sup>541</sup> in any case, because of radical Evagrianism in Syriac "miaphysite" circles, Philoxenus became cautious

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Syriac and notes, *Ilu* 10 (2005) 127–170; Eadem, *Il Chronicon di Arbela*, critical essay, translation from the Syriac, notes and bibliography (Madrid, Universidad Complutense, 2003).

<sup>538</sup> See S. Brock, "The 'Nestorian' Church: A Lamentable Misnomer," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of Manchester* 78 (1996) 23–36.

<sup>539</sup> On Evagrius's presence in Syriac culture see Guillaumont, "Les *Kephalaia Gnostica* d'Evagre," 173–332; for the diffusion up to central Asia N. Sims-Williams, *The Christian Sogdian Manuscript C2* (Berlin, 1985), 168–182; on Babai's contribution also Becker, *Fear*, 182–184.

<sup>540</sup> *Les Kephalaia Gnostica*, 202–213.

<sup>541</sup> Watt, "Philoxenus and the Old Syriac Version," 65–81.

with Evagrius<sup>542</sup>). The redaction that Guillaumont considers to be closer to the original (S<sup>2</sup>), on the contrary, is that which Babai deems interpolated. According to Babai, Evagrius was hostile to Origen's doctrines, fought against "the devil" and taught monks to do the same. In this way, he attracted upon himself the hostility of the devil, who stroke him in turn, by inspiring Evagrius's enemies to calumniate him with unjust accusations and interpolations in his works. By the time of Babai, Origen's thought had come to be regarded even as diabolic. A stage in this process is already detectable in the passage against apokatastasis ascribed to Basil, which I have already examined.<sup>543</sup>

### *Asterius of Amaseia*

The doctrine of apokatastasis has been ascribed to another Cappadocian, Asterius, bishop of Amaseia of Pontus, who was bishop between 380 and 390 CE, and a defender of (Nicene-Constantinopolitan) orthodoxy in a diverse Christian reality.<sup>544</sup> Among the extant works there are sixteen homilies and panegyrics of martyrs; ten others now seem to be lost, but Photius was familiar with them (*Bibl. Cod.* 271). One revealed that Asterius died at a venerable age, at the beginning of the fifth century.<sup>545</sup>

<sup>542</sup> See P. Harb, "L'attitude de Philoxène de Mabboug à l'égard de la spiritualité 'savante' d'Évagre le Pontique," in *Mémorial Mgr. Gabriel Khouri-Sarkis (1898–1968)*, ed. F. Graffin (Louvain, 1969), 135–155. On Evagrius's influence on Philoxenus, especially in moral and ascetic matters, see R.A. Kitchen, "The Lust of the Belly is the Beginning of All Sin," *Hugoye* 13,1 (2010) 49–63.

<sup>543</sup> See above in this same chapter, the section on Basil.

<sup>544</sup> J. Leemans, "Christian Diversity in Amaseia: A Bishop's View," *Adamantius* 13 (2007) 247–257, through the texts of Asterius sees that in Amaseia there were different Christian groups at that time; Asterius endeavoured to bring them to unity.

<sup>545</sup> Fourteen homilies seem to be authentic in PG 40,155–480, others seem to be by Asterius the sophist. See C. Datema (ed.), *Asterius of Amaseia. Homilies I–XIV* (Leiden, 1970); Idem (ed.), "Les homélies XV–XVI d'Astérios d'Amasée," *Sacris Erudiri* 23 (1978/9) 63–93; C. Mango (ed.), *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972), 37–39; J. Leemans–W. Mayer–P. Allen–B. Dehandschutter, *Let Us Die That We May Live: Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs* (London–New York, 2003), 162–194. W. Kinzig, *Asterius Amasenus, Asterius Sophista oder Asterius Ignotus. Studien zur Autorschaft der Psalmenhomilien* (Heidelberg, 1988); Idem, *In Search of Asterius: Studies on the Authorship of the Homilies on the Psalms* (Göttingen, 1990) thinks that the Homilies on the Psalms are neither by Asterius of Amaseia nor by the homonymous Sophist (who lived in the age of Constantine), but of a third Asterius. E. Skard, "Asterios von Amaseia und Asterios der Sophist," *Symbolae Osloenses* 20 (1940) 86–132, instead, thought that these Homilies should be attributed to Asterius the Sophist, an "Arian."

A homily of his is devoted to the exegesis of the parable of Luke 16,1–12. Here Asterius observes that only God possesses a life that is absolutely imperishable. By sharing one's money, one will gain an enormous income and "eternal salvation," while the opposite behaviour will produce "punishment in fire," with no modifier that indicates eternity. Similar modifiers are absent also shortly after, in *Hom.* 2,9,3, in which Asterius takes over the Gospel description (from Matt 13:42 etc.) of otherworldly punishments ("fire that cannot be quenched, darkness in the world to come, never illuminated by light, gnashing of teeth") for those who behaved like tyrants, without mercy. Those who have done good and have shown mercy, for instance alms-giving, will have their punishment alleviated or removed. John Chrysostom, a contemporary of Asterius, insists a great deal on this. In a homily against greed,<sup>546</sup> Asterius interprets the parable of Dives and Lazarus, which was dear to him as well as to Gregory of Nyssa, who interpreted it in his *De anima et resurrectione*. The "great abyss" that separates the just from the sinner is interpreted by him in a spiritual way: it is sin, which also separates the souls from God. On the other hand, nothing can ultimately separate humans from the love of God, as Paul declares. Indeed, Asterius calls the life in the future world *αἰδιος*, that is, absolutely eternal in *Hom.* 12,7,2: ζῶν τὴν αἰδιον καὶ ἀτέλεστον. But he never describes as absolutely eternal either death or the future punishment.

The parable of Dives and Lazarus is analysed in another homily, specifically devoted to it, in which Asterius takes over the "theology of the image," which was developed especially by his contemporary Gregory of Nyssa. All people are the image of God, and yet on this earth there are huge injustices, but justice will be re-established on the other side. Sinners have not only a body, but also a soul that is earthly, in that it loves richness and pleasures. This parable is seen by Asterius as a salutary threat, a medicine that prevents the illness. Here, too, the "great abyss" is interpreted by Asterius, just as by Gregory of Nyssa, in a spiritual sense, as the symbol of sins. In this connection Asterius quotes Isa 59:1–2, from the Septuagint: "Is not the hand of the Lord so strong as to save, or is his ear so hard as to be unable to hear? But it is our sins that are interposed between us and God."

<sup>546</sup> V. Vasey, "The Social Ideas of Asterius of Amasea," *Augustinianum* 26 (1986) 413–436, denies specific Cynic influences on Asterius and rather highlights the parallels with the Christian tradition.



*Cyril of Jerusalem: Apokatastasis of All Christians?*

Cyril of Jerusalem († 387),<sup>547</sup> who knew Origen's exegesis, seems to have had a penchant, if not perhaps for universal apokatastasis, at least for that of all Christians, as other fourth-fifth century authors. Moreover, he never supports eternal damnation in his works, which consist in catechetical orations for those who were going to be baptised, delivered around 350 CE, plus the last five, the "mystagogic," which are addressed to the newly baptised and may be either Cyril's own, as is more probable, or ascribable to a disciple of his.<sup>548</sup> Cyril's homilies are rich in soteriological motifs.<sup>549</sup> Their paraenetic tone is perfectly consistent with Cyril's trust in the effectiveness of Christ's redemptive work and with the fact that punishments are threatened in these homilies, but are never said to be eternal. In particular, in *Cat.* 18, Cyril expresses a conviction that was shared by Origen, Nyssen, and the Antiochenes I shall analyse in the next sections of the present chapter: that sins will be punished in the next world proportionally. If punishment has a measure, it will also have an end. Cyril's interpretation of the Biblical assertion "the godless will be resurrected for the judgement" (§ 14) is that these people will be punished immediately after their resurrection. Not even here does Cyril add that this punishment will last eternally.

Indeed, Cyril seems to extend the final apokatastasis to all Christians, therefore all the Church, but at the same time he, like Gregory of Nyssa in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, even tends to see the Church as eventually coinciding with all of humanity: the Church "brings the whole of humanity to submission to the divinity" (*Cat.* 18,22). The very context is, notably, the

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<sup>547</sup> On the historical aspects of his episcopate see esp. J.W. Drijvers, *Cyril of Jerusalem: Bishop and City* (Leiden, 2004) on Cyril's policy of the promotion of Jerusalem thanks to the holy sites and the Cross; D.S. Kalleres, "Cultivating True Sight at the Center of the World: Cyril of Jerusalem and the Lenten Catechumenate," *Church History* 74 (2005) 431–459; P. Van Nuffelen, "The Career of Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 348–387): A Reassessment," *Journal of Theological Studies* 58 (2007) 134–146. For a survey see E.J. Yarnold, *Cyril of Jerusalem* (London, 2000); A. Doval, *Cyril of Jerusalem: Mystagogue* (Washington, 2001), and Steenberg, *On God and Man*, 128–157.

<sup>548</sup> These are very helpful also with respect to the information they provide on the liturgy of Jerusalem at that time. See J. Day, "Lent and the Catechetical Program in Mid-Fourth-Century Jerusalem," *Studia Liturgica* 35 (2005) 129–147. For a specific example see A. Stewart-Sykes, "The Anaphora of *Catecheses Mystagogicae* 5 and the *birkath ha-mazon*," *Augustinianum* 45 (2005) 309–347; see also L.F. Pizzolato, "Il regime espressivo della mistagogia gerosolimitana," *Annali di Scienze Religiose* 8 (2003) 217–234.

<sup>549</sup> See H. Hess, "Soteriological Motifs in the *Catechetical Lectures* of St. Cyril of Jerusalem," in *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997) 314–319.

same as Gregory Nyssen's: that of the eschatological submission of all to Christ, and thereby to God. Against this Church, Cyril observes, the gates of hell will not prevail, according to Christ's promise. If the Church, in Cyril's perspective, will come to include all of humanity, the implied consequences are interesting. Those who belong to this Church will attain life αἰώνιος; this "is the Father, who, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, bestows his heavenly gifts, like a spring, on all." Cyril exhorts his hearers not to despair of the possibility of attaining it, because "everything is possible with God" (*Cat.* 18,28–29). Cyril is quoting Jesus's reply to the disciples' question, who will ever be able to be saved, in Matt 19:26, Mark 10:27, and Luke 18:27. Jesus answered that "this is impossible with humans, but *everything is possible with God*." This idea also motivated Origen's apokatastasis theory, as I have argued (*nihil enim Omnipotenti impossibile est, nec insanabile est aliquid Factori suo*). In the same direction goes Cyril's quotation of Jesus's Johannine words, that whoever believes in the Son has life αἰώνιος. Cyril comments that "the ways to find this αἰώνιος life are many, because the Lord in his love has opened up, not one or two, but many doors, through which to enter the life of the world to come, so that, for him, *all may enjoy it, and in abundance*" (*Cat.* 18,30).

Other reflections of Cyril's that are particularly relevant to the apokatastasis theme are to be found in *Cat.* 5,8–9 on the value of intercession: "Faith is so powerful that not only the believer is saved, but some have also been *saved by other people* who believe." I shall have the opportunity to point out the same conviction in the *Collationes* by Cassian as well, who, not by accident, was an Origenian.<sup>550</sup> Cyril cites two examples: one is that of the paralytic of Capernaum, who was healed by Jesus on account of the faith of those who had carried him to himself. The other example is that of Lazarus, who was resurrected by virtue of his sister's faith. Cyril goes on to state:

*Even in case you have no faith or only very little, the Lord loves the human beings and shows himself benevolent toward you even just by virtue of your repentance. Only, you, for your part, pray: "Lord, help my lack of faith." [...] If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and that God resurrected him from the dead, you will be saved and will be transported into Paradise by the One who accepted the thief therein. Do not doubt that this is possible, because the One who on the Holy Golgotha saved the thief after just one moment of faith will save you as well on account of your faith.*

<sup>550</sup> This is certainly true of Cassian the Sabaite as well, so that this holds true also in case we assume that the *Collationes* were originally written in Greek by Cassian the Sabaite (see below, Ch. 4, section on Cassian).

Faith, even acquired at the last moment, is sufficient to salvation. If one has no faith, even repentance is sufficient. This idea will return in Cassian as well.

Cyril's persuasion concerning the immense value and effectiveness of intercession is perfectly consistent with his Jerusalem liturgy, in particular its prayer for those dead who are condemned to punishment. This prayer expresses the conviction that those dead will have an improvement in their condition thanks to the supplications offered in the Eucharistic sacrifice and the intercession of saints and martyrs:

We pray and offer this sacrifice *for all those who need help*. We commemorate those who have fallen asleep before us, first of all patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that, thanks to *their prayers of intercession*, God may receive our request. In sum, we commemorate all those who have fallen asleep among us, in the conviction that it will be *an enormous benefit for the souls* on behalf of which we offer supplications during the holy, tremendous sacrifice. Many will say: what advantage can a soul have, if it leaves this world with or without sins, from being commemorated in prayers? Well, should a king banish some who offended him, and should their relatives interweave a wreath and offer it to him on behalf of those punished, would not he *remit them their punishment*? Likewise, when we offer supplications to God on behalf of those who have fallen asleep, *although they are in sins*, we do not interweave a wreath, but we offer Christ sacrificed for our sins, *propitiating our merciful God both for them and for ourselves*.

Cyril also emphasises the importance of repentance. He echoes the Gospel: "If for a sinner who repents there is joy in heaven, as the Gospel says, all the happier will be the inhabitants of heaven for the salvation of so many souls." For Jesus "on the holiest Golgotha has opened up Paradise to the sinner" (*Cat.* 1,1). The example of the thief, who was saved on account of his faith, is dear to Cyril. He highlights the salvation made possible by baptism and/or a good conscience (*Cat.* 1,2–3). With baptism, "you are about to receive a shield, not perishable, but spiritual; from now on, you are planted in the invisible Paradise; you have received a new name [...] you are transplanted among the spiritual olives [...] from sin to justification, from contamination to purity [...] *it is up to God to grant grace*, but up to you to receive and safeguard it. Do not despise it only because it *is given freely*" (*Cat.* 1,4); "the remission of sins is *freely offered to all*; communion with the Spirit is granted in proportion to each one's faith" (*Cat.* 1,5–6).

Like Origen, Ephrem, and other Patristic authors, Cyril much insists on the salvific value of Christ's *descensus ad inferos*, made "that death might return those whom it had devoured, according to what is written: 'I shall redeem them from the power of the tomb and subtract them from the hands

of death" (*Cat.* 14,17); death and hell are depicted as astonished for being deprived of their prey (*Cat.* 14,19). Otherworldly fire, in *Cat.* 15,2, is a testing fire; in this connection, Cyril quotes 1 Cor 3, in which sinners are said to be saved, through fire. Cyril identifies that fire with the evangelical αἰώνιον fire, and, like Origen, is convinced that it will burn out sins, and not sinners, who will rather be purified: "If the *works of one's life* are like straw, without substance, *they will be burnt by fire* [...] 'I shall make your sins as white as snow and wool,' which is a symbol of the *remission of sins* and of *innocence*" (*Cat.* 15,20).

In the same catechesis, the terminology of duration is applied by Cyril in a way that is worth remarking: while he describes otherworldly fire simply as αἰώνιον, that is, belonging to the world to come, and of indefinite duration, he is very clear that the reign of Christ "will have no end" and will be "forever." In the same direction goes Cyril's observation that those who are said to "have perished" and to be "lost" and "dead"—with expressions such as ἀπόλωλα or τέθνηκε, those employed by Luke in the parable of the lost drachma or the lost son, which are both recovered—are not lost or dead forever: "For it is said that a human being 'perishes,' as is written: 'Behold, the just perishes, and nobody cares,' *even if we expect a resurrection*; in the same way we also expect a resurrection of the heavens" (*Cat.* 15,3).

Cyril focuses on the problem of evil in *Cat.* 2. Evil arises from a wrong choice, although the subject of this choice is good. "Sin is a dreadful thing. The worst illness of the soul is transgression, which cuts the soul's tendons and also becomes the cause of fire in the other world."<sup>551</sup> An evil that is chosen by the human being itself [...] the plant that was planted was good, but the fruit coming from free will is evil. *The One who planted it is not responsible for it, but the vineyard will be burnt in fire.*" Like Origen, Cyril in § 3 insists that the devil suggests sinning, but is unable to compel those who do not want to sin. Those who allow the devil to tempt them, and do not cure themselves, will not "die," but "will need to seek the Physician," that is, Christ, in his role of healer of souls that was especially emphasised by Clement and Origen, who connected it with the final apokatastasis. Cyril emphasises the omnipotence of Christ in this respect: "*Your wounds are not excessive for the skill of the great Physician*; only, you remit yourself in faith; tell your Physician which your illness is" (*Cat.* 2,6). Cyril exemplifies as follows: if your eyes are ill, "endeavour to cure yourself in time, lest you become blind and must then go in search of the Physician." And the therapy is repentance: "sin is a

<sup>551</sup> Cyril, like Origen, even sees sin as a punishment to itself and identifies the fire that torments sinners with their very sins: "the sinner burns when he commits a sin."

horrible evil, but *not incurable*; horrible for those who continue to stick to it, but *easy to cure* for those who detach from it through repentance" (*Cat.* 2,2). Like Origen, Cyril maintains that the devil "was created good by God, and became 'devil,' i.e., a 'calumniator,' because of his free will, and received his name from his action" (*Cat.* 2,4). But God is far more powerful than the devil: "Because of him, our forefather Adam was chased out due to his disobedience: [...] is there no way of salvation left? We have fallen down: is it impossible to stand up again? The One who resurrected *Lazarus, who had been dead for four days*, and was already smelling, will he not be able—and much more easily—to raise you who are alive? The one who poured out his invaluable blood for us *will liberate us from sin*. Let us not despair of ourselves, brothers; let us not abandon ourselves to a condition without hope. *For it is terrible not to believe in a hope for repentance* [...]. The thief who *did not hope for forgiveness was desperate*, whereas the one *who hopes for forgiveness reaches repentance*" (*Cat.* 2,5). The reference, again, to the thief who died with Jesus is telling, because he was dying; therefore, it seems that the forgiveness to which Cyril refers should be understood as otherworldly.

What Cyril states in §7 concerning Adam's salvation is significant. He remarks that "Adam, the first human being to be created, sinned. Now, could not God have immediately brought death upon him? But look at what the Lord did, look at God's *immense love for humanity*: he placed him to dwell right before Paradise, that, seeing from where he had fallen, *he might then be saved by means of repentance*." Intercession cooperates with repentance for salvation:

Moses prayed for a high priest who had sinned, and had success with God: will not Jesus, God's only-begotten Child, *be successful with God when he intercedes for us?* [...] Only, human being, you *repent, and grace will not be kept away from you* [...] And *how much has God forgiven angels*, which we do not even know! (*Cat.* 2,10)

Cyril insists at §15 on the power of repentance, which can even extinguish the fire of punishment: "Go home, close the door, and pray to be forgiven; pray God that he may *pull you out of the glowing flames*; for *confession can even extinguish fire*." That this fire is that of hell is indicated immediately afterwards:

If you do not believe that repentance is able to *extinguish the fire of hell*, learn this from what happened to Ananias. (*Cat.* 2,16)

Therefore, salvific repentance is possible even when a sinner must be liberated from the fire of hell. Therefore, "let nobody despair of their own salvation" (*Cat.* 2,19). Cyril repeats this concept again and again:

Let a sinner repent and nourish a good hope, because the same grace is present now as well [...] Be comforted, Jerusalem: the Lord will *remove all your iniquities*; the Lord will *wash away the dirtiness* of your sons and daughters, by means of the *Spirit that judges and burns*; he will pour pure water upon you and *you will be liberated from all your sins*. (Cat. 3,15–16)

Cyril emphasises the salvific value of Christ's crucifixion in 4,10: Christ was crucified that humans might be liberated from their sins. In 4,11 Cyril mentions again Christ's *descensus ad inferos*, a soteriological theme that was clearly dear to him. In 4,20 Cyril, like Origen in his anti-Gnostic polemic and like Gregory Nyssen, insists on the absolute equality of all souls by nature (an example that he gives is the equality of the souls of men and women) and their differentiation on the basis of their free choices; as a consequence, he rejects the doctrine of predestination. Finally, in 4,31 Cyril, like Gregory Nyssen at the end of his *De anima*, claims that the bodies of the risen persons will be different from one another in accord with their merits. The same concept is repeated in 18,19: "We all shall be resurrected with our spiritual bodies, but not all with bodies of the same kind. For, if one is just, one will receive a heavenly body, that one may be able to converse with the angels. But if one is a sinner, one will receive a spiritual body suitable for bearing the torments of sins, so to be able to burn in the fire of the world to come without being consumed." Again, Cyril does not say that this stay of sinners in that fire will be eternal.

*The School of Antioch:  
Diodore and Theodore as Supporters of the  
Apokatastasis Doctrine*

Let me now turn to the "school of Antioch," in which, at the time of the Cappadocian Fathers and shortly later, Diodore and his disciples flourished. Diodore was bishop of Tarsus in Cilicia from 378 to 393, but came from Antioch, where he led the ἀσκητήριον for many years. Among his disciples, Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom are prominent.<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>552</sup> This section on the school of Antioch at its latest stage was presented at a seminar at Oxford University in April 2012. I warmly thank all the participants for the insightful discussion, and especially Sebastian Brock and Mark Edwards.

a. *Common Testimonies on the Soteriology of Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia*

Diodore and Theodore are especially relevant to the present investigation in that both of them are reported to have espoused the doctrine of apokatastasis, and a careful examination of their extant writings actually confirms these reports.

An important attestation comes from the seventh-century mystic St. Isaac of Nineveh—himself a supporter of apokatastasis, as I shall show<sup>553</sup>—in his *Second Part*, 39,8–13: both Diodore and Theodore, he says, professed this doctrine and taught that the duration of otherworldly punishments will be commensurate with the gravity of sins and will not be infinite. Isaac’s testimony is confirmed by Solomon, the thirteen-century Syriac metropolitan of Bostra, or Basra, and himself a supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis, in the very last chapter (60) of his *Book of the Bee*. Here, he offers a long and detailed analysis and shows his agreement with Origen’s line: the doctrine of apokatastasis must be spread only to those who are spiritually advanced, and not to those who do the good out of fear and not for love. The *Book of Memorials* provides an example of a teaching that is good for the latter, whereas the teaching that is good for the former is that of apokatastasis, which is exemplified by excerpts from Isaac of Nineveh, Theodore “the Expositor” (sc. the Exegete, alias Theodore of Mopsuestia), from an unnamed work that nevertheless can be identified with his *Contra defensores peccati originalis*,<sup>554</sup> and Diodore of Tarsus, from his book on the salvific economy.<sup>555</sup>

Some of the Fathers terrify us beyond our strength and throw us into despair; and their opinion is well *adapted to the simple-minded* and transgressors of the law. Others among them encourage us and bid us rely upon Divine mercy; and their opinions are suitable and *adapted to the perfect* and those of settled minds and the pious.

In the *Book of Memorials* it is written as follows: “This world is the world of repentance, but the world which is to come is the world of retribution. As in this world repentance saves until the last breath, so in the world to come justice exacts to the uttermost farthing. And as it is impossible to see here strict justice unmingled with mercy, so is it impossible to find there strict justice mingled with mercy.”

<sup>553</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on Isaac of Nineveh.

<sup>554</sup> CPG 3860. A valuable summary of this work is found in Photius (*Bibl. cod.* 177).

<sup>555</sup> Cited as *De providentia* in CPG 3820b. See H.-G. Weis, “Diodor von Tarsus *Περὶ προνοίας*” in *Paul de Lagarde und die syrische Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Göttinger Arbeitskreis für syrische Kirchengeschichte (Göttingen, 1968), 217–230.

Mâr Isaac says thus: "Those who are to be scourged in Gehenna will be *tortured with stripes of love*; they who feel that they have sinned against love will suffer harder and more severe pangs from love than the pain that springs from fear." Again he says: "The recompense of sinners will be this: the resurrection itself will be their recompense instead of the recompense of justice; and at the last He will clothe those bodies which have trodden down His laws with the glory of perfection. This act of grace to us after we have sinned is greater than that which, when we were not, brought our nature into being." Again he says: "In the world which is to come *grace will be the judge* and not justice."

Mâr Theodore the Expositor says: "Those who have here chosen fair things will receive in the world to come the pleasure of good things with praises; but the wicked who have turned aside to evil things all their life long, when they have *become ordered in their minds by penalties* and the fear that springs from them, and *choose good things*, and *learn how much they have sinned* by having persevered in evil things and not in good things, and by means of these things receive the knowledge of the highest doctrine of the fear of God, and become instructed to lay hold of it with a good will, will be deemed *worthy of the happiness of the Divine liberality*. For He would never have said, 'Until you pay the uttermost coin,' unless it had been possible for us to *be freed from our sins through having atoned for them by paying the penalty*; neither would He have said, 'he shall be beaten with many stripes,' or 'he shall be beaten with few stripes,' unless it were that the penalties, being *measured according to the sins*, should *finally come to an end*." These things the Expositor has handed down in his books clearly and distinctly.

So also the blessed Diodore, who says in the *Book of Providence*: "A lasting reward, which is worthy of the justice of the Giver, is laid up for the good, in return for their labours; and *torment for sinners, but not everlasting*, that the immortality which is prepared for them may not be worthless. They must however be *tormented for a limited time, as they deserve, in proportion to the measure of their iniquity* and wickedness, according to the amount of the wickedness of their deeds. This they will have to bear, that they *suffer for a limited time*; but immortal and *unending happiness* is prepared for them. If it be then that the rewards of good deeds, as great (in proportion to them) as the times of the immortality which are prepared for them, are much longer than the times of the limited contests which take place in this world, *so must the torments for many and great sins be much less than the greatness of mercy*. So then it is not for the good only that the *grace of the resurrection* from the dead is intended, but also for the wicked; for the grace of God greatly honours the good, but *chastises the wicked sparingly*."

Again he says: "God pours out the wages of reward beyond the measure of the labours (wrought), and in the abundance of His goodness He lessens and *diminishes the penalty* of those who are to be tormented, and in His mercy He shortens and *reduces the length* of the time. But even so, He does not punish the whole time according to (the length of) the time of folly, seeing that He



*requisites them far less than they deserve, just as He does the good beyond the measure and period (of their deserts); for the reward is everlasting.* It has not been revealed whether the goodness of God wishes to punish without ceasing the blameworthy who have been found guilty of evil deeds (or not), as we have already said before (\*\*\*) But *if punishment is to be weighed out according to sin, not even so would punishment be endless.* For as regards that which is said in the Gospel, ‘These shall go away into αἰώνιος punishment, but the righteous into αἰώνιος life’ [Matt 25:46], this word αἰώνιος [*l-’ôlām*] *is not definite*: for if it be not so, how did Peter say to our Lord, ‘Thou shalt not wash my feet *l-’ôlām*’ [John 13:8], and yet He washed him? And of Babylon He said, ‘No man shall dwell there *l-’ôlām*’ [Isa 13:20], and behold many generations dwell there.

In the *Book of Memorials* he says: ‘I hold what the most celebrated of the holy Fathers say, that He cuts off a little from much. The penalty of Gehenna is a human’s mind; for the punishment there is of two kinds, that of the body and that of the mind. That of the body is perhaps in proportion to the degree of sin, and He lessens and diminishes its duration; but that of the mind is *l-’ôlām*, and the Judgement is *l-’ôlām*.’—*But in the New Testament l-’ôlām* [αἰώνιος] *does not mean ‘without end’.*”

To Him be glory and dominion and praise and exaltation and honour for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.<sup>556</sup>

Since Solomon has handed down a longer excerpt from Theodore than Isaac has, I think, with Sebastian Brock, that he is likely to depend, not on Isaac himself, but on an independent source. This enhances the value of his attestation. In this passage, the paragraph on Isaac consists in three quotations from his work, which I shall discuss in the chapter devoted to him. The following quotation from Theodore, which in its first part is much fuller than Isaac’s, illustrates how Theodore understood otherworldly suffering as instructive and purifying, since thanks to this sinners will convert to God and thus will have a share in the blessedness granted by God’s grace. I shall comment later on the quotations adduced by Theodore, in order to point out the identity of interpretation between him and Gregory of Nyssa.

The room devoted by Solomon to two long quotations from Diodore’s work on Providence or the salvific economy is particularly ample, since these are crucial arguments. Solomon clearly wants to emphasise their content, all the more in that he concludes the whole of his work with these very quotations.<sup>557</sup> This clearly shows that he agrees with Diodore and professes

<sup>556</sup> I quote, with small emendations, the translation of *The Book of the Bee* by E.A. Wallis Budge (Oxford, 1886), 139–141.

<sup>557</sup> In an East Syriac manuscript copied in 1615 (ms. 9 in the Thrissur collection of the Church of the East) the *Book of the Bee* by Solomon is found together with a work entitled, “The Story of a Demon who Repented and was Admitted in the Love of God.”

his doctrine of apokatastasis. Diodore's first fragment shows that he adhered to Origen's idea (expressed in *Fr. in Rom.* from the Catenae 22,11 and elsewhere) that otherworldly retribution will have a measure, and in particular it will be commensurate with one's sins, whereas blessedness, which derives, not from retribution, but from God's grace, will be commensurate with nothing, and thus will have no measure and no end.

The first passage that Solomon quotes from Diodore also conveys the notion that the eventual apokatastasis will reveal that the resurrection is a grace for all humans. Indeed, if the wicked were resurrected only in order to be punished, the resurrection would no longer be a good, because for them it would be better not to rise again. This is the very same argument that seems to underlie a fragment of Theodore of Mopsuestia I shall discuss in a short while. It is not surprising that Theodore drew on his teacher's reasoning. The second passage from Diodore is extremely interesting as well, since it shows his profound linguistic awareness of the meaning that *ôlām* and *l-ôlām*, αἰών and αἰώνιος have in the Bible: they do not indicate eternity. I shall return soon to the importance of this terminological awareness in Diodore, since it directly bears on the doctrine of apokatastasis. In this fragment, he rightly declares that in the New Testament αἰώνιος (in Hebrew, cited in the Syriac, *l-ôlām*) does not mean "without end," so that expressions such as "αἰώνιος punishment," "αἰώνιος fire," and the like do not indicate a punishment that is eternal, i.e., without end. This fragment clearly confirms what I have argued elsewhere,<sup>558</sup> that is, how crucial this lexical question was to the issue of apokatastasis.

Shortly after Isaac, in the eighth century, John of Dara provides a confirmation concerning, again, both Diodore and Theodore together in his work *On the Resurrection of Human Bodies* 4,21:

Diodore of Tarsus, in the book he wrote on the providential economy, and Theodore, a disciple of his and the teacher of Nestorius, in many passages claim that *damnation will come to an end*.

Unfortunately we do not seem to have preserved Diodore's work on the providential economy—which is the same as quoted by Solomon of Basra and which may well have disappeared precisely on account of the doctrine of apokatastasis it defended—but from what is extant of Diodore's works, as I shall show, it is possible to confirm John's, Isaac's, Solomon's, and the others' attestations.

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<sup>558</sup> In Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition.

In his *Liber Scholiorum*, 2,63, Theodore Bar Konai (who knew the work of Bardaisan, too, another supporter of apokatastasis, as I have demonstrated), while discussing the question whether those who are in Gehenna can be made worthy of the Kingdom, says:

Some among the wise and learned, such as Mar Diodoros and the blessed Interpreter [*sc.* Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia], have indicated this *in an enigmatic way*, by adducing that God is not only just, but also merciful, and that *it becomes the One* who judges with justice to have sinners suffer in a measure that is *proportional to their sins* and then make them *worthy of blessedness*.

Theodore Bar Konai's reference to the "enigmatic way" in which Diodore and Theodore supported the apokatastasis doctrine, together with the loss of most of their works, can explain the reason why this point in their treatments is regularly overlooked, or at times even questioned. But I shall point out that a painstaking analysis of their works reveals hints that confirm Isaac's and the others' clear attestations. Theodore's fragment, moreover, offers a valuable indication concerning one of the arguments that Diodore and Theodore used in support of the apokatastasis doctrine: it is the same *theological* argument used by Origen and his followers, based on what is *worthy of God*, what *becomes God*.

#### b. Diodore

After the testimonies that regard both Diodore and Theodore together as supporters of the theory of apokatastasis, I shall now concentrate on those which concern Diodore alone, and then Theodore alone.

For Diodore we have a Syriac fragment cited by 'Abdisho (Ebedjesu): *poena [...], iniquis, non tamen perpetua [...], sed ut aliquo exiguo tempore, iuxta mensuram delicti, torqueantur*.<sup>559</sup> This fragment is entirely consistent with all the testimonies I have adduced so far. Otherworldly punishment will not be eternal, but commensurate with each one's sins.

Isaac of Nineveh in his *Second Part*, 39,11–13, after the common testimony on Diodore and Theodore that I have already mentioned, refers specifically to Diodore. He—himself a supporter of the apokatastasis doctrine—reports Diodore's view that otherworldly suffering will last only a short time, whereas blessedness will last for all eternity, and "not even the immense evilness of demons can overcome the measure of God's goodness." The

<sup>559</sup> J.S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, III, I (Romae 1725 [rist. Piscataway, NJ, 2004]), 324.

quotations are from Diodore's book *On Providence* 5–6.<sup>560</sup> As I shall point out speaking of the Origenian phase of Augustine, "God's goodness" is not simply to be understood as God's kindness and mercy, but—much more metaphysically—as the fact that God is the absolute Good, whereas evil has no ontological subsistence. Diodore is professing the same metaphysical monism that Origen supported against the "Gnostics," and that Augustine (using Origen's weapons!) supported against the Manichaeans in the very years of Diodore's last period on earth.<sup>561</sup> Not accidentally, Diodore too used his metaphysical monism against the Manichaeans: he wrote 25 books *Contra Manichaeos* (Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 85).

What emerges from these testimonies and from Ebedjesus's and Isaac's fragments is perfectly in line with Diodore's conception of the therapeutic value of all suffering established by God. Diodore too, like Clement, Origen, and Gregory Nyssen, presents punishments established by God as therapies, in his Commentary on Psalms,<sup>562</sup> while commenting on Psalm 4:

As an expert surgeon, [God] applies to us, or allows others to apply to us, heavy and difficult conditions, as though they were a *cauterisation* or a *surgical incision*. [...] God does everything *for the sake of our good*, since *nothing will come to pass that is not good*.

Diodore insists on the same concept in his commentary on Psalm 39 as well; all sufferings inflicted by God have a therapeutic and educative function:

I realise that all of your scourging is aimed at *correcting and improving a person* [...] in order to *improve their soul* [...] I must accept a punishment that is *commensurate with the limits of my life*.

The last sentence also introduces the idea, typical of Origen and all the supporters of the apokatastasis doctrine, that all punishments, or better all purifications, must be commensurate with one's sins, which are limited at least on account of the limited duration of one's life, and therefore cannot be eternal.

<sup>560</sup> CPG 4,3820 (b).

<sup>561</sup> For Augustine, see below, Ch. 4, the full demonstration in the section on Augustine.

<sup>562</sup> A severe Judgement on this commentary has been expressed by J.J. O'Keefe, "A Letter that Killeth": toward a reassessment of Antiochene exegesis or Diodore, Theodore, and Theodoret on the Psalms," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000) 83–104, who deals with the whole exegetical line of Diodore and Theodore. Their hostility to allegorical and spiritual exegesis, in his view, tended to break the unity between the Old and the New Testament. Hill criticised Theodore's approach as more limited than that of Diodore. See below, however, on prudence in drawing too strong an opposition between the Antiochian *theōria* and the Alexandrian allegoresis of Scripture.

It is meaningful that Diodore applies Christ's universal sovereignty to his salvific economy and understands the universal submission to Christ announced in 1 Cor 15:24–28 as a joyous submission (*Comm. in Ps.* 2). This is very close to Origen's equation, taken over by Gregory of Nyssa as well, between the eventual universal submission to Christ and universal salvation. This universal submission is the object of Diodore's reflection also in *Comm. in Ps.* 45 and 8, where he also develops the so-called theology of the image, one of the pillars with which Origen and Gregory Nyssen buttressed their theory of apokatastasis.

The reports about Diodore's adhesion to the theory of apokatastasis are also perfectly consistent with his linguistic awareness concerning the value of αἰών, and consequently of the adjective αἰώνιος, in the Bible.<sup>563</sup> For Diodore, like Origen, Didymus, and the Cappadocians, knew very well that αἰώνιος in Scripture does not mean "eternal," and that expressions such as πῦρ αἰώνιον or αἰώνιος κόλασις do not at all mean "eternal fire" or "eternal punishment." This emerges not only in the long fragment from Solomon of Basra that I have already quoted, but also in some of Diodore's works preserved in Greek. In his commentary on Psalm 48:8, he observes that in the sentence, "God has established Zion εἰς αἰῶνα," this last expression, "εἰς αἰῶνα, does not signify 'to eternity,' for the whole of time; how could it, if Jerusalem was besieged by Antiochus and then by the Romans? Rather, Scripture typically calls so things that *last for a certain period of time*." In support of this claim, Diodore cites Psalm 21:4: "You gave him length of days εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος": since king Ezekias will obviously die, Diodore observes, εἰς αἰῶνα cannot possibly mean "forever, for eternity." This is exactly the kind of observations Diodore carries on in the Syriac fragment quoted by Solomon of Basra as well.

Diodore shared this linguistic awareness with Origen. Indeed, even if the School of Antioch is often regarded as opposed to the Alexandrian line as hostile to allegorical interpretation, this dichotomy should be seen as much more limited and relative, and influenced by a polemic against pagan Neoplatonic allegoresis.<sup>564</sup> Indeed, the position of Diodore and Theodore

<sup>563</sup> See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 203–204.

<sup>564</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Giovanni Crisostomo e l'esegesi scritturale: le scuole di Alessandria e di Antiochia e le polemiche con gli allegoristi pagani," in *Giovanni Crisostomo: Oriente e Occidente tra IV e V secolo*, I (Rome, 2005), 121–162; R.C. Hill, transl., *Diodore of Tarsus: Commentary on Psalms 1–51* (Atlanta–Leiden, 2005), xi–xxxvii; M. Mitchell, "Christian Martyrdom and the 'Dialect of the Holy Scriptures': The Literal, the Allegorical, the Martyrological," *Biblical Interpretation* 17 (2009) 177–206, also expanded in Ead., *Paul the Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge, 2010), 107 and *passim*. Cf. F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis*

against allegory is to be seen, not as a reaction against Origen, but as a reaction against "pagan" Neoplatonic allegory, especially that of Emperor Julian and Secundus Salustius.<sup>565</sup> Within the Christians, I would not even exclude a polemic against "Gnostic" allegoresis, or at any rate an allegorism which, unlike that of Origen, denied the historical level of the sacred text (Theodore in his Commentary on the minor Pauline epistles, 1,75 Swete,<sup>566</sup> criticises not allegorists in general, but those who, unlike Origen, rejected the literal-historical reading, *narrationem rerum gestarum*). Nor should the Antiochenes' predilection for *θεωρία* be overstated; for example, Adrian's *Isagoge*, a Scriptural exegetical handbook, reveals a critical attitude toward *θεωρία* (*praes.* §133).<sup>567</sup> And the influence of Origen's eschatology on the main exponents of this school, at least Diodore and Theodore, should be taken into full consideration.<sup>568</sup> There were also tight relationships between the school of Antioch and the Cappadocians, especially between Diodore and Basil.<sup>569</sup> Diodore and Theodore were particularly venerated in the Eastern Syriac church, the so-called Nestorian church; especially Theodore was called "the Interpreter" and highly honoured there.<sup>570</sup> He is also mentioned in the *Chronicle of Arbela* (69 Kawerau = 65 Ramelli) as a "perfect man" and a defender of orthodoxy, and appears in the so-called *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools*, a work of Eastern Syriac ("Nestorian") inspiration, in a very positive light. Precisely for their alleged "Nestorianism," Diodore's and Theodore's writings were destroyed by imperial decree, under the pressure of Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>571</sup> However, part of their writings are preserved in Greek, and a good deal in translations, especially Syriac.

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and the Formation of Christian Culture (Cambridge, 1997), 161–216, who labels Antiochene exegesis as "ikonik" (173; cf. 169–176); D. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch* (Cambridge, 1982), 29–30.

<sup>565</sup> On which see F. Thome, *Historia contra Mythos* (Bonn, 2004). Diodore's and Theodore's exegesis, moreover, was guided by pastoral concerns: see esp. R.Ch. Hill, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch* (Atlanta–Leiden, 2005).

<sup>566</sup> See now *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on the Minor Pauline Epistles*, tr., intr. and notes by R.A. Greer (Atlanta, 2010).

<sup>567</sup> CPG 6527; ed. by F. Goessling, *Adrians Εισαγωγή εις τας θείας γραφάς* (Berlin, 1887). The critique of *θεωρία* is rightly noted by P. Martens, "Antiochene Exegetical Advice: Adrian's *Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*," paper at the NAPS Annual Meeting, Chicago May 2012, forthcoming.

<sup>568</sup> J.-N. Guinot, "L'école exégétique d'Antioche et ses relations avec Origène," in *Origeniana VIII*, 1149–1166, rightly highlights Origen's influence on the Antioch school.

<sup>569</sup> See R. Pouchet, "Les rapports de Basile de Césarée avec Diodore de Tarse," *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 87 (1986) 243–272.

<sup>570</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Linee introduttive a Barhadbeshabba," *Ilu* 9 (2004) 127–181.

<sup>571</sup> See J. Behr, *The Case against Diodore and Theodore. Texts and their Contexts* (Oxford–New York, 2011).

One of the works of Diodore that are preserved in Greek is his preface to his own commentary on the Psalms.<sup>572</sup> This is also particularly relevant to the present research. Diodore there observes that some Psalms are moral and others doctrinal. The latter are especially those which teach the doctrine of the Providence of God. These, Diodore says, refute not only those who do not believe in the Creator, but also those who believe in the Creator but do not believe in divine Providence. Scholars wonder who the latter are, and why Diodore insists so vehemently on Providence and on believing in Providence throughout his commentary. These cannot be Epicureans, since Epicureans did not believe in divine Providence, to be sure, but they believed in gods that were not the Christian God. The target of Diodore's criticism were rather Christians, and those Christians who did not believe in the power of the Providence of God. It sounds awkward, since one would suppose that all Christians believe in divine Providence, but Diodore conceived of divine Providence in the same way as Origen did: God's Providence is that which in all ways and by all means provides for the salvation of all, until the *telos*. It is most significant that the fragment on apokatastasis quoted by Isaac of Nineveh comes precisely from Diodore's lost book *On Providence* (Περὶ προνοίας), in which Diodore evidently argued that God's Providence leads to the eventual apokatastasis. In this perspective, those who believe in God but not in God's Providence are those Christians who believe in God, but not in the eventual apokatastasis, which is the triumph of divine Providence, and in which the above-quoted fragments confirm that Diodore believed.

But there are further confirmations. Diodore seems to me to have been inspired by Origen's homilies on Psalms 36–38, in which he states (in *In Ps.* 35 2,2) that in eternity there will be neither the sinner himself nor the place of his sin, since, after the purification of all evil, there will be no sinners any more. And in *In Ps.* 38, 1,5 he blames—exactly like Diodore after him—those who do not believe in the Providence of God, calling them “blasphemous.” Likewise Origen, in *De or.* 5,1, criticises those who admit of God's existence in words, but in fact eliminate God's Providence (τῶν μέχρις ὀνόματος τιθέντων Θεόν, τὴν πρόνοιαν δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀποστερούντων). It is probable that Diodore was inspired by Origen in his criticism of those who believed in God but not in

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<sup>572</sup> Cf. R.C. Hill, transl., *Diodore of Tarsus: Commentary on Psalms 1–51* (Atlanta–Leiden, 2005). Text in CC, Gr., 6, 1980, by J.M. Olivier. Diodore's commentary was handed down in an anonymous form because of the condemnations of Theodore and Nestorius, which affected Diodore as well. Cf. Hill, *Reading the Old Testament*.

divine Providence. For Origen, and probably also for Diodore, not believing in the eventual apokatastasis is tantamount to refusing to believe in divine Providence. Indeed, Origen, like Clement before and Diodore after him, insists on the omnipresence of divine Providence—which Clement deemed active even in hell, an idea that will reappear in Isaac of Nineveh<sup>573</sup>—which operates both before human falls and afterwards (*In Ps.* 36, 3,8). And he stresses that punishments decided by God are exclusively aimed at the punished person's improvement (*In Ps.* 37, 1,1). The "heretics" whom Origen is criticising are "Gnostics," who did not believe in universal restoration in the sense in which Origen did.<sup>574</sup> Thus, Origen's influence on Diodore is very probable also in this respect, and for both of them those who believe in God the Creator but do not believe in divine Providence are those Christians who do not believe in the eventual universal restoration, which is the supreme work of divine Providence.

Diodore's insistence on divine Providence is clear in other passages as well, for instance in the conclusion of his commentary on Psalm 4: "Grant me peace, o Lord; may I *never imagine that what is marked by your Providence is bereft of it.*" In the above-mentioned preface to the commentary on the Psalms Diodore emphasises that "God's Providence reaches even the most insignificant beings," because no creature of God is deprived of the participation in divine Providence, "including Providence for the future," which probably refers to the eschatological victory of Providence. Diodore argues that the Godhead would never have created insignificant beings, such as creatures are before It, only in order to abandon them, leaving them without Its Providence.

Straight in his commentary on Psalm 1 Diodore insists on the impiety of those who think that "God exists, but does not apply Providence to all existing creatures," and in his Commentary on Psalms he repeatedly insists on God's Providence, mercy, and φιλανθρωπία often in connection with salvation granted by God.<sup>575</sup> The first of those which Diodore labels "doctrinal Psalms" is Psalm 4, and Diodore's comments on it entirely revolve around the notion of Providence. The very beginning is: "Psalm 4 is a refutation of those who presume that creatures are outside the reach of God's

<sup>573</sup> See above, Ch. 1, and below, Ch. 4, the sections on Clement and Isaac respectively.

<sup>574</sup> See above, the section I devoted to apokatastasis in "Gnosticism," and more in detail in "Apokatastasis in Coptic Gnostic Texts from Nag Hammadi and Clement's and Origen's Apokatastasis," *Journal of Coptic Studies* 14 (2012) 33–45.

<sup>575</sup> E.g. Psalm 5; 12; 18; 19; 22; 28; 30; 32; 33; 34; 36; 37; 40; 41; 42; 43; 44; 51.



Providence.” Just like Origen, Diodore too thinks that divine Providence is not in conflict with each one’s free will and responsibility, and rewards and punishments as consequences of each one’s choices. For Diodore goes on to say:

The greatest expression of Providence is that an identical lot is not granted to all *indiscriminately*, sinners and just, but *all benefit from God’s care in proportion to their individual merit*. Indeed, if all were to enjoy the same goods *immediately*, this would be an effect, no longer of Providence, but of confusion and lack of discernment.

All will enjoy the same goods, not immediately, because of the differentiation of their merits, but in the *telos*, after the purification and perfecting of all. Psalm 4, as Diodore remarks, is like a hymn devoted to Providence, “and it is really a hymn of praise to God to express the belief that *all people are the object of God’s care, and all that which concerns them falls under God’s Providence*.” Throughout his comments on Psalm 4, Diodore strongly insists on Providence and on the intermingling of justice and Providence in God: “Those who proclaim that God does not exert Providence are quite mistaken; their vain argument consists in the conviction that the Judge does not exert supervision [...] refusing to acknowledge God’s role as a Judge together with Providence.” For Diodore, just as for Origen, God’s justice and God’s Providence are closely related to one another, in the same way as God’s Providence is not in the least at odds with each one’s free will and responsibility.

That Diodore conceives of Providence as implying salvation is also indicated in his introduction to Psalm 19, another doctrinal Psalm according to his classification. Here he returns to the classification of those who do not believe in divine Providence, or do not believe in it appropriately. Of those who believe in it, some, Diodore observes, confine Providence to heaven; others to the whole of humanity but not the single human beings. The former might be Aristotelians, who excluded the sublunar world from the reach of divine Providence; however, if Diodore is speaking of Christians, these may be those who confined Providence to heaven or Paradise, excluding those who are punished. For in Diodore’s view, just as in Clement’s and Origen’s, punishments themselves are providential, in that they are purifying and therapeutic. This is repeated by Diodore in his comment on Psalm 28,5: “It is by You that I am chastised, and my suffering *is aimed at being beneficial to my soul* [...] a moderate *correction* for my *improvement*.” The second category of those who have a distorted conception of divine Providence is identified by Diodore, in his comment on Psalm 19, with those who believe that divine Providence extends to humanity as a whole, qua redeemed, but

not to each individual. Diodore's idea is similar to that of Origen: divine Providence extends to every single creature, and respects its free will, but leads it to salvation.

At the end of his comments on Psalm 19, Diodore prays to God in terms that are perfectly consistent with this line of thought, and which will emerge again in Cassian:<sup>576</sup> "My Lord, help me to persevere in the attitude I have when I make the right choices, and in the cases in which I choose to make mistakes, redeem me!" Likewise, in his comments on Psalm 51 Diodore remarks that it is God who grants repentance and a renewal of one's heart and thoughts. Again with consistency, in his comments on Psalm 5 Diodore observes that God's Providence takes care "even of those who are going into perdition and ruin as a consequence of their evilness." Shortly after, Diodore, against those who extended God's Providence only to some, or only to the wholeness of humanity, observes that Christ died "for each single human."

If generally no satisfactory explanation is offered of Diodore's emphasis on Providence in his commentary on the Psalms, and no satisfactory identification is proposed of those who believe in God but not in God's Providence, this is probably because these statements of Diodore's, preserved in Greek, are not read in the light of the Syriac fragments and testimonies concerning him. The latter clearly reveal that he professed the doctrine of apokatastasis, and illuminate many Greek passages, all the more in that they reveal (especially those provided by Isaac of Nineveh and Solomon of Basra) that Diodore wrote a treatise precisely devoted to God's Providence and providential economy, and in it he argued that the eventual outcome of the activity of Providence will be exactly the final universal apokatastasis.

Diodore's protology is also in line with his Origenian eschatology as I have reconstructed it. Michael Glycas, *Annales* 152, reports that Diodore of Tarsus, together with Anastasius Sinaita, Severus of Antioch, and others maintained the creation of an intelligible world prior to that of the visible world. And he associates their position to that of the Cappadocians, Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, who both claimed that there was a world prior to this one and adapted to the angelic powers. The presence of this Origenian reminiscence does not surprise in the Cappadocians, but not in Diodore either, who was obviously influenced by Origen's ideas more than is usually assumed.

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<sup>576</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on Cassian (also with the issue of the identity of this author).

Last, but not least, it is also interesting to notice that Diodore surely knew Bardaisan's arguments against Fate very well, and that the work in which these arguments are preserved, the *Liber legum regionum*, culminates with the exposition of the doctrine of apokatastasis, as I have already argued. Diodore's knowledge of these arguments is proven by his own work against Fate.<sup>577</sup> Its title, Κατὰ Εἰμαρμένης, coincides with that of Bardaisan's work according to Epiphanius and Theodoret.<sup>578</sup> Here, Diodore addresses again the problems of theodicy, human freedom, and Providence, in the framework of a refutation of astrological determinism. Diodore wants to erase even the name of Fate, while Bardaisan kept it—but in fact, like Diodore, he deprived it of any power, excluding human free will and nature from its jurisdiction and making it the expression of God's Providence. Diodore clearly deploys Bardaisan's arguments against Fate. John Chrysostom, a disciple of Diodore in Antioch, based himself on Diodore in turn when he devoted six homilies to the refutation of fatalism.

In Book 1 Diodore argues against the eternity of the world, in that he considered it to be the theory on which the supporters of the omnipotence of Fate based themselves. For such an idea could develop only in the absence of the notion of a God who is a creator and governs the world after bringing it into existence out of nothing.<sup>579</sup> Here, too, Diodore insists that "the world should be deemed to be neither uncreated nor created spontaneously, *nor bereft of Providence*, but we should know with clarity and we should consider to be indubitable that it is *God who provides creatures both with being and with being well*." These categories of "being" and "being well" will return in Maximus the Confessor, as I shall show in due course.

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<sup>577</sup> PG 103,829–876. Some attention was rightly drawn to this treatise thirty years ago by C. Schaeublin, "Zu Diodors von Tarsos Schrift gegen die Astrologie (Phot. Bibl. cod. 223)," *Rheinisches Museum* 123 (1980) 51–67.

<sup>578</sup> See my *Bardaisan of Edessa*, 126–145, with full analysis of Diodore's work and demonstration of its dependence on Bardaisan's work against Fate. Diodore's treatise is lost, but a detailed abridgement is preserved by Photius *Bibl. cod.* 223 (PG 103,829–876). His witness is confirmed by the *Suda* in the lemma devoted to Diodore himself, in which a work Κατὰ ἀστρονόμων καὶ ἀστρολόγων καὶ Εἰμαρμένης is recorded.

<sup>579</sup> In this respect, Diodore agreed with Bardaisan, who regarded this world as created by God through Christ-Logos and entirely ruled by God's Providence. Diodore argues that the world had a beginning and will have an end, just like all creatures in it. This is a sign of their very status of creatures, dependent on God (col. 831). The elements themselves are creatures (col. 833). Diodore wanted to support the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* and to exclude that anything else, besides God, exists that is uncreated, i.e. immutable and autonomous. Now, Bardaisan himself likewise conceived of the "beings" as creatures (even though preexisting this world), and dependent on God.

Diodore refutes the same "climatic" theory of Fate that was rejected by Bardaisan in the *Liber legum regionum*. This theory is found refuted only in Christian authors, beginning with Bardaisan himself and including Gregory Nyssen, as I have demonstrated.<sup>580</sup> It is the astrological doctrine according to which the earth is divided into climatic zones, each of which is subject to the influence of a given planet or constellation of the zodiac (Ch. 29). It is again Bardaisan who inspired Diodore's argument that the heavenly bodies cannot influence the course of nature. Fate cannot extend its own control to everything; for example, it cannot have snow fall during the summer. Likewise, Bardaisan in the *Liber* argued that Fate, for instance, cannot have either a child or a decrepit man beget a baby. For both generation and seasons depend on the laws of nature, against which Fate has no power. Diodore adduces this very same argument, deriving from the inviolability of the laws of nature, in many variants.<sup>581</sup> His distinction between the body, governed by nature, and the spirit, endowed with free will, also corresponds to that which Bardaisan draws in the *Liber*. Diodore even produces the same examples as Bardaisan does when he mentions those aspects of human life that are governed by nature and over which Fate has no power.<sup>582</sup>

Especially in Book 6, Ch. 44, Diodore takes up Bardaisan's argument to prove that it is human free will, rather than stars, that determines the customs and laws of the various peoples. Diodore's argument is identical to that of Bardaisan.<sup>583</sup> Diodore proves even closer to Bardaisan in Ch. 45,

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<sup>580</sup> See my *Bardaisan of Edessa*, 122–126.

<sup>581</sup> In the case of animals, their figure, their way of nourishing or expressing themselves, their migrations, etc., depend on their respective species, and therefore on their nature, and not on Fate. Humans, instead, depend not only on nature, which determines the laws of their own species, within the sphere of their bodies, but also on their free will, on which their behaviour and choices depend.

<sup>582</sup> Col. 86o: "Nature annihilates the power of Fate and overcomes it in all respects: in the extension of times, the union of bodies, the varieties of births, transformations with age, and all other aspects depending on nature, none of which Fate is capable of changing."

<sup>583</sup> Col. 86i: "It is evident that the intellect was given by God to human beings; with passing time and labour, and, above all, thanks to God's help, it discovered what was useful to life: there is no need to invent further explanations with much effort. How is it that, even within the same race, a whole people grow their hair long, whereas others cut it? And how is it that another people has as a custom that men have intercourse with their own mothers, while the vast majority of the peoples consider this custom abominable? And peoples are different for numberless other distinctions of laws, life styles, and habits. And no course of stars has those who keep their hair long cut it, or forces others to do things which they did not learn in their customs. And these are the contents of the present chapter."

in which he responds to the astrological objection concerning climatic zones, each governed by a star, to which Bardaisan had replied first. And Diodore responds to this objection exactly like Bardaisan, producing the same examples of the Jews and the Christians, two peoples who maintain their laws in different regions of the earth.<sup>584</sup> The most disparate peoples

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<sup>584</sup> Here is Diodore's reworking of Bardaisan's argument: "In the subsequent chapter he adds that, even if the fanatic supporters of Fate deemed it good to have recourse to the simultaneous rising of the stars which are different from those of the zodiacal signs and planets, and neither do they rejoice in the effects of the horoscope, nor are they in reciprocal harmony, but each of them produces its own effects, according to the different climates, let them tell us where the argument concerning the horoscope could remain stable and unshaken. For, each one of these stars, according to what they say, with its own forces wipes out the influences of the horoscope. What is more, not even all of them occupy the same measure of the earth, like, for instance, the space occupied by the Iberians, the Lazians, the Romans, and the others. How is it possible, then, that this people here may live with a life style, laws, and customs diametrically opposed to those of this other people? Second: how could one explain that very many peoples, albeit remaining within the boundaries of their land, have converted to the customs of the Romans? Moreover, third: the Jewish people migrated to Egypt, but did not abandon their ancestral laws. Then, after leaving Egypt, they settled in Palestine and Arabia, and chased away their previous idolatrous inhabitants by means of wars, and they did not detach themselves from the Mosaic laws. But not even when it was brought to Babylon in captivity, and when, subsequently, it was dispersed throughout the earth, did the Jewish people separate from its ancestral laws, nor did any of the simultaneous risings of the stars, or the horoscope, force them to break the commandment either of the circumcision or of the Sabbath. *Our own race*, then, *I mean that of the Christians*, had its origin four hundred years ago, and immediately has conquered the whole inhabited world. It has detached each people from its own customs and has converted them to the way of living characterised by piety, without their changing their homeland, but while they continued to inhabit the same as before. Thus, Christianity has demonstrated that the old influences of the contiguous risings are fallacious, vain, and risible. The preaching of unlearned people [sc. the Christian apostles] has *manifestly annihilated these theses* [sc. the theory of the climatic zones, first refuted by Bardaisan], *to which the theory of the horoscope had already yielded*, in that it did not work. Once upon a time, the world was subject to the Assyrians, then it was Babylon that exercises its power; then the Medes, in turn, took command; then the world power passed on to the Macedonians. But each people kept its own customs, and they were governed by their own sovereigns, although they did not know the common Lord who governs upon all. Now, instead, just as the faith is one, so is also the emperor one, and the only legitimate power of the Romans extends over three hundred peoples or more, just as one and the same religion also does. And the horoscope of each single human, now, forces nobody either to adore idols, or to have intercourse with their mothers, or to other behaviours due to which the various peoples not only differed from each other, but were also opposite to those who were contrary to them. Now, let them tell us what follows: if it is Fate that determines the changes of religion and thought, how is it that it had no power to change the rest as well? For it has clearly demonstrated that it could not persuade or force anyone to wish ignominy, poverty,

in every zone have converted to Christianity and submitted to the law of Christ.<sup>585</sup> Moreover, Bardaisan too, like Diodore, observed that Christianity had already spread “in every land and all regions.” The second argument adduced by Diodore is that of peoples who, conquered by the Romans, modified their laws and customs and assumed those of the Romans. This argument is inspired by that of Bardaisan on peoples changing their laws upon the decision of their governors; it even echoes the example adduced by Bardaisan, i.e., that of Abgar the Great, who, after his conversion to Christianity, forbade a pagan ritual mutilation. Indeed, according to Cassius Dio, he officially introduced that reform as an assimilation to the Roman

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illness, slavery, insult, or many other things of this kind, but, just as nature has proven in each case stronger than the influences of the horoscope, so *our reasoning faculty, maintaining its own privilege of freewill*, in all that it does on the basis of a free choice, proves superior to the astrologers' babble.”

Diodore closely follows Bardaisan's argument. The reference to the Lazians, a Colchian people, cited by Lucian (41.44), who was only slightly anterior to Bardaisan, is particularly interesting. Indeed, it is on the basis of this reference that in my edition of the *Liber*, col. 596 Nau, I proposed to correct the reading “Zazi” of the ms. into “Lazi,” also given the resemblance between 𐤆 and 𐤌, in Syriac, both in *estrangela* and, even more, in *serto*. It is likely that the ms. of this work that Diodore read, whether it was Syriac (as I tend to believe) or Greek, still had the exact reading, whereas the only Syriac ms. of the *Liber* that is available to us has a variant reading that is probably corrupt. This is my translation of the *Liber* passage: “In Northern Sarmatia and in Iberia, in all the lands North of Pontus, and in the whole country of the Alans and among the Albans, among the Lazians and in Brusa, which is beyond the Douros.” A clear proof of the difficulty of this passage and of the impossibility of individuating and locating the “Zazi” (“Zasians”) is given by the versions of Eusebius, Caesarius, and the Ps.-Clementines: none of these keeps “Zazi”; they do not change this reading into “Lazi” either, but they omit this bit altogether, or else they replace it with other expressions, completely different. Eusebius in *PE* 6,10 renders ἐν Χρυσηῖ; Caesarius entirely skips this phrase, and the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones* only have *in Chrysea insula*. This clearly indicates that none of these authors had any more access to the correct reading, whereas Diodore had. I believe Diodore had a good Syriac text, or at least a good Greek version, at his disposal. The very detail of the Lazi and that concerning the Christians' race, which I have illustrated, make me think that he did not simply use Eusebius's excerpts, but a full text of good quality, either Syriac or Greek.

<sup>585</sup> The very words with which Diodore introduces his treatment of the Christians, “our race [γένος], I mean that of the Christians,” are an echo of the phrase with which Bardaisan introduced his own example of the Christians: “the new race of us Christians.” It even seems that Diodore is citing, not from the Greek translation, which in Eusebius is different, but from the Syriac text or from a Greek version different from that of Eusebius, who renders ἀρεσις, not γένος. Bardaisan's adjective “new,” in reference to “race,” also corresponds to Diodore's sentence, adapted to his own time, that Christianity is only four hundred years old and yet has conquered the whole world.

customs.<sup>586</sup> The argument concerning the Jewish people, too, was present already in Bardaisan, and that concerning Christians is identical in Bardaisan and in Diodore, with the addition of the point based on the succession of the empires.<sup>587</sup> The latter was a natural addition for Diodore, who lived in a Christian empire, in a time in which the extension of the empire coincided with that of Christianity.<sup>588</sup>

Diodore concludes his extensive argument, parallel to that of Bardaisan, by observing that changes in religion, convictions, laws, and so on, depend, not on Fate, but on free will. Likewise, the fact of adhering to a given philosophical school or religion depends, not on Fate, but on a free moral choice for good or evil. In Ch. 49 Diodore adds arguments based on Scripture and the salvific economy. He calls the latter “the great mystery of our salvation,” because he includes in it the eventual apokatastasis, a theory which he supported, like Bardaisan.

Diodore agrees with Bardaisan that Fate is impotent with respect to human free will. There is only one point in which he detaches himself from Bardaisan’s position, that is, the complete removal, not only of the concept, but even of the name of Fate. Bardaisan in fact had eliminated Fate as well, actually limiting himself to maintaining its name. Diodore conceives as directly dependent on God what Bardaisan conceived as dependent on God through fate, which he deemed, not an independent force, or even a deity, but an expression of God’s Providence. He had already emptied Fate of any autonomous function and authority, having it depend on God.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>586</sup> See Ramelli, “Edessa e i Romani.”

<sup>587</sup> See my “Alcune osservazioni sulla teoria orosiana della successione degli imperi,” *Invigilata Lucernis* 22 (2000) 179–191.

<sup>588</sup> A proviso should be made for the question of the barbarians and their conversion, which in the age of Theodosius began to be particularly felt. See my remarks in “L’inedito *Pròs basiléa* di Temistio, con due postille e due tavole,” in coll. with E. Amato, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 99 (2006) 1–67. What I noted concerning Diodore is also true of Eusebius; see Verdoner, *Narrated Reality*, 160: “Chronologically, geographically, and politically, the Roman Empire appears as the borders of the church and as the entire world.”

<sup>589</sup> So, why did Bardaisan maintain the name of “fate,” instead of abolishing it altogether? I believe he did so for at least two reasons. First, he wished to keep the notion of the stars as mediators of the dispensation of God’s will; second, he probably intended to retain a precise correspondence. Indeed, the “nature–fate–freewill” tripartition, in which all these elements depend on God—nature is created by God, Fate is governed by God’s will, and free will is a gift of God to the human being—exactly corresponds to the anthropological tripartition that is typical of Bardaisan’s thought and was already present in Paul, in Origen, and in other philosophers as well. This is the relevant equation in Bardaisan’s theoretical

According to Diodore, at any rate, Bardaisan was right in demolishing the pagan doctrine of Fate, and availed himself of excellent arguments. Indeed, Diodore appropriated most of them, often even to the point of verbal echoes; he knew the work of a supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis.

c. *Theodore*

In addition to the common testimonies on Diodore and Theodore that I have already quoted, from Isaac of Nineveh, John of Dara, and Solomon of Basra,

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framework: *nature* : *body* = *fate* : *soul* = *free will* : *intellect/spirit*. For, nature determines the laws that regulate generation, nutrition, and so on, and concerns the physical sphere; fate, according to Bardaisan, presides over the cases of life that do not depend on human will, such as richness or poverty, good health or illness, exiles, the length of one's life, even if some aspects of these may indeed be influenced by our voluntary choices—for example, a dissolute life may bring about illnesses; imprudent behaviours may lead one to death, and the like—, and free will is exercised by our intellect, which is defined by Bardaisan in the *Liber* as “child of freedom,” that is, free. I suspect that it is also for the sake of this symmetry that Bardaisan hesitated to abolish fate also in name, after refuting and eliminating it in fact. Diodore missed this point. What he failed to grasp is that, according to Bardaisan, it is not the case that the body is subjected to fate, while the soul is free, but it is precisely the vital or inferior soul, i.e., the soul that vivifies the body, that is subjected to fate, whereas what is free from fate is the intellect. This misunderstanding is evident from Diodore's own criticism (col. 876): while speaking of Bardaisan's followers mentioned in Ch. 51, Diodore affirms that they “subject the body to the rule of fate.” This is certainly untrue of Bardaisan himself, who subjected the body to nature, not to fate, as is transparent in the *Liber*. In his refutation, Diodore insists on the body and argues that, since Christ healed many persons in their bodies, it is impossible that this body be submitted to fate. In fact, this was not what Bardaisan thought. Here is Diodore's relevant piece: “But if not even the works of the salvific economy accomplished long ago by means of the angels and prophets were an effect of the horoscope (that is, of the configuration of the stars at each one's birth), nor even the works performed by our Lord Jesus Christ, when he manifested himself in the body, healing innumerable human bodies, how could we possibly deem it good to affirm that the body is governed by the astral configuration that was present at each one's birth? For, otherwise, they would imply that God's threats against the disobedient and God's promises of rewards for the obedient are false. Or else, if the first option is true, the second is false. Moreover, how is it possible to submit the body to the power of the stars but set the soul free from it? [...] Bardaisan's followers should necessarily, either subject the soul too to the stars, or else, given that they dare not do so, declare the body free from their influence as well. And this is how Ch. 52 ends.” Thus, Diodore states that one ought to either submit to Fate the soul, too, which Bardaisan's followers refused to do because of human free will, or leave the body free from Fate as well. But what Diodore misses is that Bardaisan subjected to Fate the inferior and vital soul, not the superior and rational soul, that is, the intellect, which he regarded as absolutely free from fate, nor did he submit the body to fate, since he rather subjected it to nature. Diodore's argument is misleading here, in that it does not correspond to Bardaisan's anthropology, so it cannot be considered to constitute a valid objection.



four others are extant that concern Theodore of Mopsuestia (350 ca.–428)<sup>590</sup> alone and are very clear. One is Latin,<sup>591</sup> one Greek, and two Syriac.

The Latin (PL 48,232) reads as follows:

*Ubi iam loco muneris resurrectio putabitur, si poena sine correctione resurgentibus inferatur? [...] Quis ita demens ut tantum bonum credat materiam fieri resurgentibus infiniti supplicii?*

Theodore rejects the idea of a resurrection that ends up in an eternal punishment which is not aimed at correcting sinners. In this case, the resurrection would be, not a glorious gift and good, but a damage.<sup>592</sup> From the fragments of Diodore preserved by Solomon of Basra—in which, as I have pointed out, Diodore observed that resurrection must be a good and not an evil, a benefit and not a damage, as it would be if punishment after it were eternal—it results that Theodore was deeply inspired by his teacher Diodore on this score. Theodore seems to share Origen's and Nyssen's conception of the eventual resurrection: not only physical, so that it can become *materia infiniti supplicii*, but also spiritual, so to bring about reformation

<sup>590</sup> A good introduction to his biography and theology and a useful history of scholarship on him is now offered by F.G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (London–New York, 2009); Idem, *The Roles of Christ's Humanity in Salvation: Insights from Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington, 2005). See also R. Devreesse, *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste* (Cité du Vatican, 1948); M. Simonetti, "Note sull'esegesi veterotestamentaria di Teodoro di Mopsuestia," *Vetera Christianorum* 14 (1977) 96–102; L. Van Rompay, *Théodore de Mopsueste. Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes (Psaume 118 et Psaumes 138–48)*, CSCO 435–436 (Louvain, 1982); P. Bruns, *Theodor von Mopsuestia. Katechetische Homilien, I–II*, FC, 17 (Freiburg, 1995); Idem, *Den Menschen mit dem Himmel Verbinden*, CSCO, 549, Subsidia 89 (Louvain, 1995); S.P. Brock, *From Ephrem to Romanos: Interactions between Syriac and Greek in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 1999), Ch. 3: "The Syriac Background to the World of Theodore of Tarsus" (from 1995); S. Gerber, *Theodor von Mopsuestia und das Nicänum. Studien zu den katechetischen Homilien, Vigiliae Christianae Suppl.* 51 (Leiden, 2000); M. Debie–G. Coutourier–T. Matura, tr., *Théodore de Mopsueste. Homélies catéchétiques* (Paris, 1996); I. Onatibia (intr.)–S. Janeras (tr.), *Teodor de Mopsuèstia. Homilies Catequètiques* (Barcelona, 2000); Thome, *Historia contra Mythos*; Idem, *Studien zum Johanneskommentar des Theodor von Mopsuestia* (Bonn, 2008).

<sup>591</sup> Excerpts from Theodore's works were preserved in the *Collectio Palatina* and Marius Mercator offered a Latin translation. See E. Schwartz, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, vol. 1,5,1 (Berlin–Leipzig, 1924), 173–176.

<sup>592</sup> A similar argument seems to have been advanced, centuries after, by K.J. Clark, who thinks that God's goodness is incompatible with the doctrine of the eternity of hell. The Medieval solution that God is good with the damned, because he allows them to continue to exist is countered by Clark on the grounds that existing among eternal torments cannot be better than not existing at all. Thus, better not to be resurrected than to be and endure eternal tortures. Moreover, an eternal torment is not adequate to a finite sin. See K.J. Clark, "God is Great, God is Good: Medieval Conceptions of Divine Goodness and the Problem of Hell," *Religious Studies* 37 (2001) 15–31.

and purification. Only in this way can resurrection be a “great good” and “gift.” Photius (*Bibl. cod.* 81) seems to confirm this, when he observes that Theodore “maintained an odd doctrine concerning the resurrection of sinners.”

The Greek testimony, usually overlooked by the few scholars who have touched upon the issue of Theodore's doctrine of apokatastasis, comes from Photius, who in *Bibl. cod.* 177 is providing a summary of Theodore's lost treatise *Against Those Who Claim that Humans Sin by Nature and not by Intention*. Photius remarks that in his view Theodore in that treatise shows to “suffer from the heresy of Nestorius, and also from that of Origen, at least in that *he suggests the end of punishment* [κατά γε τὸ τέλος ὑποφωνεῖν τῆς κολάσεως].” Indeed, shortly after in the same “codex” Photius attests that in this work Theodore proclaimed that the resurrection will be followed by the restoration: “in that *apokatastasis that comes after the resurrection* [ἐν τῇ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν ἀποκαταστάσει].”

The first Syriac fragment is a part of the above-mentioned testimony of Solomon of Basra, which reads as follows:<sup>593</sup>

The wicked [...], after *converting* by means of the fear of punishments or of the violence of punishments themselves [...], will finally deserve to *enjoy God's generosity*. For Jesus would never have said, “until you give back the very last coin,” unless it were possible that, after undergoing punishment for our sins, we *shall be liberated* from them. Nor would Jesus have said [...], “he will be beaten many times” and “he will be beaten few times,” unless *punishment were commensurate with sins* and, after undergoing it, sinners *finally ceased to be punished*.

Theodore is on the line of Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and Evagrius. Punishment will certainly take place if deserved, but it will be commensurate with one's sins and purifying. Therefore, it will eventually come to an end. Theodore quotes the very same Gospel passage, Matt 18:23–25 and Luke 7:41, as quoted by Gregory of Nyssa (*De an.* 101–104) to express that when each one has paid back all of one's evil, “up to the last coin,” that is, up to the last smallest degree, through otherworldly suffering, each one will be liberated from evil and suffering, and they will “attain a condition of freedom and

<sup>593</sup> This is Assemani's translation, *Bibl. Or.* 3,1,323 (who, however, does not report the whole of the fragment I reported beforehand, when citing Solomon of Basra): *Mali [...] postquam poenarum vi atque metu resipuerint [...] tum demum fruitione divinae liberalitatis merebuntur. Numquam enim dixisset: “Donec reddas novissimum quadrantem,” nisi fieri posset ut pro peccatis poenas solventes ab iis liberemur; neque [...] “vapulabit multis” et “vapulabit paucis,” nisi poenam peccatis commensam solventes finem tandem habituri essent.*

confidence.” For, if Jesus says “up to the last coin,” this means that there will come a *last* coin, a coin after which the payment of the debt is completed and the debt itself is extinguished. Gregory and Theodore both interpret the parable in the same way, as a proof of the eventual apokatastasis of all. The very same interpretation, as I have pointed out, is also found in Evagrius (*KG* 4,34), another supporter of apokatastasis. They were all, I think, inspired by Origen, who commented on the same parable in *Hom. in Luc.* 35, with a view to its pastoral and deterring value: *Si [...] qui parum debet non egreditur nisi exsolvat minutum quadrantem, [...] qui tanto debito fuerit obnoxius, infinita ei ad reddendum debitum saecula memorabuntur.* Nevertheless, this infinite revolving of aeons will come to an end at apokatastasis, when no one will be in any aeon any longer, but God will be “all in all.” Then, the debts of all will be extinguished, after being paid.

The Syriac fragment I have quoted is also cited by Isaac of Nineveh (*Second Part*, 39,7–8) who says that it derives “from the end of Book 1 of the work that Theodore composed *Against Those Who Say that Sin is Ingrained by Nature*.”<sup>594</sup> This polemic of Theodore’s is similar to Origen’s against the “Gnostics.” But even before the discovery of Isaac’s *Second Part*, this fragment was already known thanks to Salomon of Basra, who even quoted a larger portion of Theodore’s work. Isaac’s attestation, however, is very important both because it confirms Solomon and because it provides the title of the work of Theodore of Mopsuestia from which Solomon’s and his own quotation come. It is clearly the same work as that which is summarised by Photius, whose résumé I have already analysed.

A second Syriac fragment also comes from Isaac of Nineveh’s *Second Part*, 3,3,94 and likewise supports the idea that otherworldly punishments will be limited in time and will not endure forever. It comes from a lost work of Theodore’s, *De sacerdotio* (CPG 4,3853).

Another Greek testimony, besides that of Photius, confirms the three fragments: Leontius of Byzantium accused Theodore of supporting the doctrine of apokatastasis. Consistently with the rest of the testimonies I have adduced, Leontius too states that Theodore saw eternal damnation as a threat—in Origen’s pedagogical line—and thought that Christ will give mercy to everybody.<sup>595</sup> It is possible, however, that Leontius is slightly misrepresenting Theodore’s view, since neither Diodore nor Theodore thought that sinners will *not* be punished altogether in the other world. They rather

<sup>594</sup> It is the so-called *Contra defensores peccati originalis* (CPG 4,3860).

<sup>595</sup> *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* 3. This work is preserved in PG 86,1267–1396.

thought that punishments will not be eternal, in that they will be, not merely retributive, but purifying.

Theodore's extant works confirm the fragments and testimonies that attest his adhesion to the doctrine of apokatastasis. In his comments on Psalm 1,5 Theodore admits, to be sure, that the impious will be punished after their resurrection, but he does not say that they will be punished *eternally*. Even in commenting on Psalm 6,6, Theodore states that in hell people will be punished, but he does not claim that this punishment will be *eternal*. This is because he, like his teacher Diodore, knew the correct meaning of αἰώνιος in the Bible (see below), and thus in the prologue to his commentary on Psalm 2 he correctly interprets "αἰώνιος condemnation" as *damnatio futura*, and not *damnatio aeterna*. Indeed, that of two αἰῶνες of the dispensation of God is one of the most important characteristics of Theodore's thought. The present aeon, for Theodore just as for Origen, is a school, a training place for souls; it would never had come to existence if Adam had not sinned, but on account of that sin God made humans mortal, not out of wrath, but providentially (*Comm. in Gal.* 1:4).

This comes close to Origen's view, and even closer to Origen's is, to my mind, Theodore's definition of αἰών (*ibid.*), not at all as "eternity," but as "an interval of time," διάστημα χρόνου. He gives two examples: the short interval of one person's life, or the longest possible interval, from the foundation of the world to the second coming of Christ. No identification of αἰών with eternity is even mentioned. So it is well understandable that for Theodore "αἰώνιος life" in Scripture is life in the world to come, and indeed he glosses "αἰώνιος life" with ζωή μῆλλουσα. The same awareness applies to "αἰώνιος death," "αἰώνιον fire" and the like. And for the future aeon, Theodore is confident that the grace of the Spirit will prevent people from sinning; in the future aeon humans will be "immortal, impassible, and free from sin" (*ibid.*). Theodore insists on his holistic notion of the resurrection, physical and spiritual—very similar to Origen's—in *Comm. in Gal.* 3:26: *ultra non poterunt peccare, immortalitatem semel potiti*.

Theodore uses the very terminology of apokatastasis, especially in his comment on Psalm 8:

not to have them fall into perdition (ἀπολέσαι), but to fashion them anew (ἀναπλάσαι) [...] to fashion them anew after they had fallen *and restore them again into their original condition* (διαπεσόντας ἀναπλάσαι καὶ πάλιν εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαταστήσαι).

The very expression εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαθίστημι / ἀποκατάστασις is the exact designation of the eventual apokatastasis in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.

An idea that Theodore shows in these passages is identical to one expressed by Origen especially in his *Homilies on Jeremiah*:<sup>596</sup> whenever God destroys or kills, it is in order to rebuild anew in a better state. This also corresponds to the conception of physical death as a gift of God that is found in Methodius, Gregory Nyssen, and other Origenian authors: death puts a limit to sin and thus to otherworldly punishment; it destroys the human being to have it made anew in a much better way, without evil. Like Origen, moreover, Theodore sees no contradiction between justice and goodness or φιλανθρωπία in God, as is clear for instance from *Comm. in Ps.* 25,8–10; 36,6–7; 40,11, in which Theodore assimilates justice to mercy and salvation. Also, like Gregory Nyssen in *De anima*, in his comment on Psalm 28 he rejects the identification of Hades with a place under the earth.

What is more, Theodore interprets the eventual universal submission to Christ as universal salvation, exactly like Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and his own teacher Diodore of Tarsus. Theodore often speaks of Christ's universal sovereignty, *dominatio super omnia* (*Comm. in Ps.* 2 prologue; 2,6 and 6b–7a; cf. 2,8; 8,2), and in his comment on Psalm 8 insists on the submission of every being to Christ, quoting Hebr 2:8 and 1 Cor 15; he observes that “all human beings will submit to the Son,” including the impious (Psalm 9:21). And above all he claims, in his comment on Psalm 3:11, that the submission to Christ will be tantamount to salvation: “the submission of a soul that is not sad, but joyous, is a *submission* [*subiectio*] that produces, *not suffering*, but *salvation* [*salvatio*].”

I have briefly mentioned that Theodore's linguistic awareness in respect to the terminology of time and eternity surely helped him to shape his doctrine of apokatastasis, just as it helped his teacher Diodore, as I have shown. This is surely confirmed by a careful investigation into Theodore's own linguistic use, at least in his surviving Greek works.<sup>597</sup> The philosophical term αἰδιος, which, unlike αἰώνιος, does mean “absolutely eternal,” is preferred by Theodore when he is speaking in his own voice, and he applies it to the divinity to denote its absolute eternity (*Comm. in Proph. Min. Hos.* 4,15, where it occurs thrice; cf. *Zach.* 1,8b). In *Hagg.* 2,2,5a, Theodore observes that the Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all three characterised by the same “divine and eternal essence,” αἰδιος (likewise in *Adv. Iul.* fr. 8,7, where Theodore applies this adjective to the Father and the Son). In *Comm. in Proph. Min. Zach.* 1,8b, Theodore glosses the biblical expression “Your

<sup>596</sup> See Ramelli, “Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah,” 59–78.

<sup>597</sup> See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 213–216 on Theodore.

throne, Lord, is εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος" with αἰῶδιον βασιλέα Κύριον, "the Lord is the eternal King," since here εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος refers to God and only by virtue of this may it be understood to indicate absolute eternity. In *Fr. in Hebr.* p. 202,15, Theodore remarks again on the expression εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος, in reference to the throne of God, as indicating the eternity (τὸ αἰῶδιον) of God's kingdom. Again at p. 201,18 Theodore glosses the biblical expression "creator of the aeons," in reference to God, as "eternal [αἰῶδιον] in the absolute sense, superior to every interval." Eternal things in the metaphysical sense (αἰῶδια) are those that are heavenly, immortal, intelligible, and divine (*Adv. Iulian.* fr. 3,4). Theodore also uses αἰῶδιος in reference to the future life, which he deems strictly "eternal" life, in *Fr. in Matth.* 14,6: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who became a human being for the salvation of all," thanks to his own resurrection resurrected all other human beings as well and will become for them "the principle of that eternal life [τῆς αἰῶδιους ζωῆς ἐκείνης] just as Adam was the principle of this mortal life, limited to the present time [προσκαίρου]."

Theodore uses αἰώνιος to indicate the future life, that of the αἰών to come, especially when he is citing Scripture (e.g., *Comm. in Proph. Min. Jon.* prol. §1; cf. 2,7a). In *Comm. in Proph. Min. Hab.* 3,6b, αἰώνιος is used in the meaning "ancient" in reference to hills and paths in a (partial) quotation of Hab 3:6–7. It is interesting that in *Fr. in Hebr.* p. 207,1, Theodore cites Hebr 6:20, where Christ is called "the αἰώνιος high priest," which is generally rendered "the eternal high priest," given its reference to Christ and therefore to the divine sphere. But Theodore, even here, takes αἰώνιος as referring, not to eternity proper, but to the succession of human generations: Christ is the αἰώνιος high priest because all the αἰῶνες or generations, by believing in him, will be led by him to God in the hope for the resurrection.

Theodore describes torments in the next world only as αἰώνιοι, *never* as αἰῶδιοι (see *Fr. in Matth.* fr. 28,8). Thus, he applies αἰῶδιος to the future life, when he wants to emphasise its eternity *stricto sensu*; αἰώνιος when he wants to indicate that it pertains to the world to come, or in scriptural quotations or reminiscences. Although the term is used often by Theodore, αἰῶδιος *never* refers to future punishment, fire, or death in the next world, but it is applied *only* to the future life; for punishments in the next world he uses exclusively αἰώνιος, the adjective that is encountered in his writings also in various citations of the Old Testament, where it bears its typical meaning of "remote," "ancient," "long-lasting," or else refers to the succession of generations. Theodore's linguistic use conforms both to Biblical usage and to his own belief in the eventual apokatastasis.

Consistently with this, Theodore, like Diodore, in many passages insists on the universal effectiveness of divine Providence, the love of God, and God's help (e.g., *Comm. in Ps.* 9,10; 17,7–8; 19,1; 27,3b; 33,20; 37,28; 41,14). He often polemicalises, like Diodore, against those who do not admit of divine Providence. I have argued in the case of Diodore that these people were Christians who did not believe in apokatastasis; it is probable that the same is the case with Theodore, too, who also believed in this theory. Theodore was certainly reminiscent of the importance attached by his teacher Diodore to divine Providence, to which he devoted a treatise that focused precisely on the doctrine of apokatastasis.

Theodore's soteriology is perfectly consistent with his theology, Christology, and reflection on creation, of which he has a pedagogical conception.<sup>598</sup> In *Comm. in Ps.* 40 Theodore proclaims the universal redemption operated by Christ:

In his own body Christ has realised the salvific economy for us. With the suffering of his own body he has provided the *universal remission of sin and elimination of evils* [κοινὴν παρέσχετο τῆς ἀμαρτίας τὴν ἄφεσιν καὶ τῶν κακῶν τὴν ἀπαλλαγὴν].

In *Comm. in Ps.* 18,6 Theodore, like Clement, Origen, Ephrem, and others, describes Christ as a physician, who is able to heal even those wounds and sores which seem to us impossible to heal. In *Comm. in Ps.* 42,12c, and 49,16, Theodore emphasises that God is able to liberate a soul from Hades and death, for instance in *Comm. in Ps.* 68,20–21 and 80,19–20: “from a condition of death and perils, restored to life *and salvation* [εἰς ζωὴν καὶ τὴν σωτηρίαν] close to You.” Clearly, the death from which God rescues is not simply physical death, but the death of the soul. Again, in *Comm. in Ps.* 51,11b, God is said to have iniquities disappear (the verb is ἀφανίζω) thanks to his love for humanity.

With his resurrection Christ has marked the passage from the time of imperfection to that of perfection, characterised by a new state for body and soul, and made possible by the victory over death and sin after temptation. The aim of all this is the salvation of humanity. Theodore sees Christ's

<sup>598</sup> See S. Zincone, *Studi sulla visione dell'uomo in ambito antiocheno* (L'Aquila–Rome, 1988), 92; B. Studer, “Soteriologie der Kirchenväter,” in *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, III,2a (Freiburg, 1978), 181–212; G. Koch, *Die Heilsverwirklichung bei Theodor von Mopsuestia* (München, 1965), 141–156; R.A. Greer, *The Captain of Our Salvation* (Tübingen, 1973). As for Theodore's Christology, I limit myself to referring readers to F.G. Mcleod, “Theodore of Mopsuestia's Understanding of Two *Hypostaseis* and Two *Prosopa* Coinciding in One Common *Prosopon*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 (2010) 393–424.

passage to the second state or *κατάστασις* as the commencement and guarantee of our own passage, which is in fact a return, a restoration, an *ἀποκατάστασις* (*Hom. cat.* 5,11; 12,6). This will come in the *telos*, when, for Theodore just as for Origen, death and sin will exist no more, and humans, once freed from them, will be really children of God, in the Spirit,<sup>599</sup> thanks to the communion with Christ, *homo assumptus*, who has entered immortality<sup>600</sup> and during the whole of his earthly life was a model for all other humans on account of his hope for the eternal life (*Hom. cat.* 6,1; 6,11–12; 7,9–10). After that, he has entered heaven as a high priest and has allowed us to participate in his heavenly liturgy (*ibid.* 15,16). Salvation has been wanted by the Father; and the Spirit assists humans with its grace (*ibid.* 2,10–19; 10,7–14). The Son, for his part, continually operates with the Father and the Spirit for the salvation of all humans (*ibid.* 8,17).

Thus, in *Comm. in Eph.* 1,10 Theodore can describe the eventual universal restoration (*ἀποκατάστασις*) as a recapitulation (*ἀνακεφαλαίωσις*), both of which operated by Christ. God

has recapitulated all beings in Christ [...] as though he made a renewal that epitomises all, *a restoration of the whole creation*, through Him. [...] This will come to pass in a future aeon, when *all humanity and all powers endowed with logos will adhere to Him*, as is right, and will obtain mutual concord and *stable peace*.

Once again like Origen, Theodore has universal apokatastasis depend, not on a metaphysical or cosmological necessity or anything else, but on Christ. And like Origen Theodore assumes that there will be no new fall after the eventual restoration: the peace of apokatastasis will be stable and really eternal.

<sup>599</sup> *Hom. cat.* 10,20; 16,26; *Comm. in Gal.* 3,26, I p. 55 Swete.

<sup>600</sup> *Hom. cat.* 7,10–11; *Comm. in Ioh.* 1,16, p. 26 Vosté. On Theodore's notion of *homo assumptus* see G. Kalantzis, "Duo filii and the *homo assumptus* in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia: the Greek Fragments of the *Commentary on John*," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 78 (2002) 57–78, who denies that Theodore opted for the "Nestorian" model of *duo filii*. According to McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Theodore understands the *hypostasis* as the real existence of a nature, which means that he believed there were two *hypostases* in Christ, one divine and one human. In contrast, Theodore's understanding of *prosōpon* is less clear. Each *hypostasis* has an outward form, a *prosōpon*, yet at the same time Christ's two *hypostases* are united in a single, common *prosōpon*. McLeod helpfully discusses three analogies used by Theodore to explain how two *prosōpa* can become one. Ch. 7 turns to the functional unity of Christ's two natures. McLeod reviews how Theodore sought to preserve the full integrity of Christ's humanity, especially his human free will, in its prosopic union with the divine Logos.



In *Comm. in Ps.* 8, deeply influenced by Diodore, Theodore cites 1 Cor 15:21–22: “Since death came through a human being, the resurrection from the dead likewise came through a human being; and just as in Adam all die, so also will all be vivified in Christ”<sup>601</sup>—Christ as a new Adam, Christ in that he is a human being.<sup>602</sup> Theodore is not fond of a theory of “original sin”; like Origen—who, however, did speak a great deal of the fall of rational creatures and Satan, and of course also dealt with that of Adam—he preferred to insist on individual responsibility (γνώμη, προαίρεσις, *Comm. in Ps.* 51). Also, he has no doubt in giving an axiological priority to hope for divine Grace: “We have hoped in You, and it is right that your gift is given us *as a consequence of our hope* [...] he declares blessed those who place their hope in God, since this hope can provide them with many good things” (*Comm. in Ps.* 33 and 34). In *Comm. in Ps.* 1 Theodore observes, to be sure, that beatitude is a consequence of faith and good behaviour; however, in *Comm. in Ps.* 46,11 and 45,13 Theodore states that “every help and *salvation comes* [...] *as a gift of God’s benevolence*”; “do not believe that the virtue of those who have faith is exclusively their own merit [...] those who elect to live according to virtue need [...] the help of the Spirit.” I shall point out a similar position in Cassian. In *Comm. in Ps.* 5,8 Theodore identifies divine Grace and mercy, and not our merits, with what allows people to enter God’s home. Important parallels are found in *Comm. in Ps.* 13,6; 20,14; 32,1; 65,6; 70,5–6; 80,8; 57,4, where Theodore joins mercy, Grace, and love for humanity.

It is not accidental that Theodore’s eschatology influenced Isaac of Nineveh, another supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis, who indeed cites both Diodore and Theodore as *auctoritates* in this field,<sup>603</sup> his Christology even had an impact on Ps. Dionysius.<sup>604</sup>

<sup>601</sup> See Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on Psalms 1–81*, tr. R.C. Hill (Atlanta, 2006), 96–98; the edition used is that of Devreesse, which should be integrated with *Théodore de Mopsueste. Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes* (*Ps. 118 et Ps. 138–48*), éd. et trad. L. Van Rompay, CSCO 435, Syr. 189; CSCO 436, Syr. 190 (Lovanii, 1982); Idem, “Fragments syriaques du Commentaire de Théodore de Mopsueste sur les Psaumes,” *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 9 (1978) 83–93.

<sup>602</sup> See F.G. McLeod, *The Roles of Christ’s Humanity in Salvation: Insights from Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Washington, D.C. 2005).

<sup>603</sup> N. Kavvadas, “On the Relations between the Eschatological Doctrines of Isaac of Nineveh and Theodore of Mopsuestia,” in *Studia Patristica* XLV, eds. J. Baun–A. Cameron–M. Edwards–M. Vinzent (Leuven, 2010), 245–250.

<sup>604</sup> See I. Perczel, “The Christology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: the ‘Fourth Letter’ in its indirect and direct text traditions,” *Le Muséon* 117 (2004) 409–446. On Ps. Dionysius see the section devoted to him below in Ch. 4.

*John Chrysostom's Ambiguities*

John Chrysostom was not a plain assertor of the apokatastasis doctrine; however, he was very well aware of it and was a disciple and an admirer of Diodore of Tarsus, who decidedly supported it. In his *Laus Diodori*, PG 52,764, John calls Diodore "our wise father," who had contrasted the emperor Julian when the latter endeavoured to restore pagan cults in Antioch. Thanks to his defence of orthodoxy, he won the esteem of Theodosius, who had him confirm the decrees of the Council of Constantinople (381). Moreover, as I shall analyse in the section devoted to Theophilus of Alexandria, John received at a high risk some Origenian monks chased from Egypt, in the awareness that they were no "heretics." The result of this business was his exile, in the second part of which he also died (Palladius, *Dial.* 7,24).<sup>605</sup> Palladius's very defence of Chrysostom is telling, if one considers his Origenian and Evagrian allegiance. One further consideration: like Basil and Origen, Chrysostom spoke differently from the way he thought when his public was composed of "simple" people; given that practically the whole of Chrysostom's surviving production is homiletic,<sup>606</sup> it would be difficult to find apokatastasis expounded there, since he uses the concept of eternal punishment (albeit very rarely) as a threat, with a hortatory purpose. Origen himself thought that it was opportune to use it with immature people, those who do good out of fear and not for love.

An investigation into Chrysostom's terminology of eternity is per se revealing.<sup>607</sup> He is deeply aware of the polysemy inherent in the key-term αἰώνιος and knows perfectly well that it can refer to the future aeon in contrast to the present, instead of meaning "eternal" (*In Philem.* PG 62,711; *In Hebr.* PG 63,80,22). When he speaks of punishment, fire, and death as αἰώνια, ascribing to these the sense of "eternal," he deliberately ignores that this is not the Biblical meaning of this adjective, unless it refers to God. He proves full aware of the arguments in support of the apokatastasis theory, still very much alive in his time. In fact, John bears witness to an active

<sup>605</sup> See, e.g., J.M. L  roux, "Jean Chrysostome et la querelle Orig  niste," in *Epektasis. M  langes Dani  lou* (Paris, 1972), 335–341. See below my treatment in the section devoted to Theophilus.

<sup>606</sup> On John's homilies and their social and historical setting, at least for the Antioch period, I limit myself to referring to J.L. Maxwell, *Christianisation and Communication in Late Antiquity. John Chrysostom and His Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge, 2006); Ramelli, "Giovanni Crisostomo e l'esegesi," 121–162.

<sup>607</sup> For a full treatment see See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, 204–213.

discussion concerning this doctrine in his day, and to an awareness of the issues revolving around the meaning of αἰώνιος, which he himself uses in different senses. Furthermore, he seems to consistently distinguish between αἰώνιος and αἰδιος. The latter is used in reference to God, especially when John is not quoting or paraphrasing Scripture (e.g., *De Incompr. Or.* 1.59), or to things that are closely related to God (e.g. *In Ps.* PG 55,469, where it refers to the kingdom of God, which lasts for all aeons). Therefore, αἰδιότης indicates the permanence of God beyond all times and aeons. In *Comm. in Io.* PG 59,39; 40; 50, τὸ αἰδιον is used to express the absolute eternity of the Logos in John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Logos.” John explains that the imperfect “was” indicates the past in the case of mortal creatures, but in the case of the divinity it expresses its absolute eternity; the narration in the prologue is an αἰδιος διήγησις which describes not the temporal birth of Christ, but his eternal existence as God’s Logos (47): the generation of Christ from the Father is αἰδιος (46). Τὸ συναἰδιον designates the coeternity of the Son and the Father, and the adverb αἰδίως expresses the eternal modality in which Christ is in the Father (100). On the contrary, a creature is neither αἰδιον nor ἀγένητον (40). Again, αἰδιον is equivalent to eternity *a parte ante* and *a parte post* (49). In *In I Cor.* PG 61,57 and *In II Tim.* PG 62,608 the eternity (αἰδιον) of the Son and the Father is proved by their subsistence before all aeons, πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων: once again, then, αἰδιότης is beyond the course of the aeons.

The adjective αἰδιος is used also in reference to eternal life, which is called ἀθάνατος and οὐράνιος as well (e.g., *In Philem.* PG 62,201; *Serm. in Gen.* PG 54,471). John evidently wishes to emphasise the absolute eternity of that life. In *In I Tim.* PG 62,510 heavenly goods are the eternal food humans will enjoy in the αἰδιος life. Similarly, the eternal happiness of angels is described as αἰδιος. Only in *In II Thess.* PG 62,476 does John use αἰδιος in reference to punishment, but even here, ἀθάνατος punishment and αἰδιος chastisement are presented as threats designed to arouse fear. John stresses the value of fear and threats a great deal; he draws a parallel between the fear people feel before earthly laws and kings, which is good because it causes them to avoid evil and thus spares them punishment, and the far more powerful fear of God, the eternal king, and future punishment: τιμωρία ἀθάνατος and κόλασις αἰδιος. This fear too is good and people ought always to feel it, and Scripture will help us maintain it—clearly by means of its threats. It is meaningful that the only case in which John uses αἰδιος in reference to otherworldly punishments it is against the backdrop of a discourse on threats. In all other instances, John uses αἰώνιος rather than αἰδιος to indicate sufferings in the world to come, e.g. at *In Antioch.* PG 49,72, *Adv. Iud.* PG 48,854.41, and *Serm.*

in *Gen.* PG 53,158, where the same sufferings are also called ἀπαράιτητοι τιμωρίαι, “inexorable punishments.” And in other passages the prayers of the faithful and the alms and good deeds are said to rescue the deceased from hell, to encourage the relatives of sinners to pray for them and have confidence in Jesus’s mercy. At *De Virg.* 84.59–65 Musurillo, John writes: “But it is necessary that sinners be punished immortally [ἄθάνατα] in the future, just as those who have been virtuous are rewarded; for Christ proclaimed that there is not the same end for the one and the other, and he said that just as there is αἰώνιος life for the latter, so too there is αἰώνιος punishment for the former. For when he received those on his right, he condemned those on his left, and he added: ‘And the latter shall go to αἰώνιος punishment, but the just to αἰώνιος life.’” I have already shown that “immortal” punishment does not mean “eternal punishment” and is not inconsistent with the doctrine of apokatastasis: I have pointed out that it is used by Evagrius, who certainly was a supporter of apokatastasis, and Gregory Nazianzen, who probably adhered to this doctrine as well. John may, like Jerome or Ambrose, have restricted salvation to Christians.

Κόλασις αἰώνιος, which per se means “otherworldly punishment” and not “eternal punishment,” occurs, for instance, in *Serm. in Gen.* PG 53,217 and 246, and *In Matth.* PG 59,62, in which it is said to be without a fixed limit (πέρας): this suggests that it has no well-defined duration.<sup>608</sup> In *Serm. in Gen.* PG 53,53 John calls the future punishment θάνατος αἰώνιος, “death in the world to come”; this is what the faithful will avoid according to *Comm. in Io.* PG 59,159 and 222,249. Parallel expressions are, for instance, ἀπώλεια αἰώνιος and αἰσχύνη αἰώνιος. The αἰώνιον lament is that which is uttered in the outer darkness in *Comm. in Io.* PG 59,76 (cf. *De remiss. pecc.* PG 60,760). In none of these cases does the adjective mean “eternal”; it always means “pertaining to the world to come.” The Biblical πῦρ αἰώνιον occurs frequently, of course. In *Ep. ad Theod. laps.* 8, John mentions the πῦρ αἰώνιον for those who will be punished; he refers to the words of the Gospel and, drawing a distinction between the punishment of the devil and that of human beings, on which he much insists elsewhere, he observes: “Go away from me, you damned, into the αἰώνιον fire that is readied, not for you, indeed, but for the devil and his angels. Thus, *Gehenna was not created for us*, but rather for the devil and his angels: for us, before the establishment of this aeon, his Kingdom was prepared” (1,8,54–59).

<sup>608</sup> Earlier in this same treatise (49,29) to be without πέρας is equated with being “without beginning or end,” but otherworldly punishment cannot be without a beginning, so that the meaning “without beginning or end” cannot apply to that punishment.

Αἰώνιος is also used of realities that are not confined to this world, which will pass, and of course of the eternal life and blessedness, which, when described as αἰώνια, are indicated as otherworldly proper: life and blessedness in the next world. So, in *Ep. ad Theod. laps.* 15 St. Paul is cited for the αἰώνιον βᾶρος δόξης of the blessed after their earthly sufferings. Ibid. 15 invisible things are described as αἰώνια, as they remain in the world to come, as opposed to visible things which are πρόσκαιρα and belong only to the present moment. This Pauline reminiscence occurs again in other passages, among which *De resurr.* PG 50,426, where John identifies πρόσκαιρα with present things (τὰ παρόντα) and αἰώνια with things belonging to the future world (μέλλοντα). Similarly, in *Ep. ad Theod. laps.* 20 John cites the use of αἰώνιος in Philemon, where it is said that Philemon will have Onesimus in the future world as well, as a brother and not as a slave. In *In II Cor.* PG 61,461 John connects again αἰώνια with the idea of the future: “put present things next to future ones [τὰ παρόντα τοῖς μέλλουσι], those now against those of the future world.” In *Fr. in Prov.* PG 64,681 God makes us pass from death to immortality in the world to come (εἰς ἀθανασίαν αἰώνιον): clearly one cannot render “eternal immortality”; the underlying idea is rather that immortality awaits us after death in this world.

Of course, ζωὴ αἰώνιος occurs frequently, often in NT citations (e.g., in *S. Iul. mart.* PG 50,667). Life in the next world is obtained thanks to δικαιοσύνη αἰώνιος, which is the justice conferred on us by Christ for the world to come (*Adv. Iud.* 868). A parallel between life in the world to come (αἰώνιος) for the body and ἀθανασία for the soul is drawn in *Comm. in Io.* PG 59,84. Another description of the future life is “repose in the world to come,” ἀνάπαυσις αἰώνιος (*In Philem.* PG 62,272) and “consolation in the world to come,” παράκλησις αἰώνιος (*In II Thess.* PG 62,488). Other expressions with αἰώνιος are related to otherworldly blessedness, such as the αἰώνιος home, not made by human hands, which we shall have in the world to come, or the “release in the world to come” (ἄνεσις αἰώνιος). In *In Matth.* 58,522 John, developing a theme that is dear to him, affirms that charity provides life αἰώνιος, takes people out of the hands of death, constructs for them αἰώνιοι homes in heaven. John often speaks of the liberation of sinners from infernal torments, thanks to the intercession of prayers and charity, and very much insists on divine mercy. Indeed, he strongly emphasises the value of intercession, through prayers and works of mercy, which can free the dead from torments in the next world, as I shall explain.

Another expression designates an aspect of life in the world to come: πλοῦτος αἰώνιος, riches in the next world (e.g., *In I Thess.* PG 62,414 and 467). In *In Ps.* 118 PG 55,694, the αἰώνιον profit of virtue is said to bear

fruit in the world to come (αἰώνια). At *In II Thess.* PG 62,483 life in the future world is considered to be an αἰώνιος fruit from which good is disseminated here in this world. The passage to life in the new aeon is a birth into the future world (αἰώνιος) in *In I Thess.* PG 62,456. Many expressions with the adjective αἰώνιος are drawn from the Septuagint, in which it often signifies, not “eternal,” but “mundane,” that is, of this world rather than of the other. In reference to God and his attributes, αἰώνιος tends to convey the idea of absolute eternity, a sense deriving from the nature of God and not inherent in the term itself. In *In Ephr.* PG 62,32 the power of the devil is αἰώνιος, but in this case, John explains—who thus shows himself to be aware of the polysemy of the adjective—it means “bound to the present aeon” and doomed to come to an end along with the end of this world.

Two other passages seem important in respect to John's awareness of the debate over the meaning of αἰώνιος in relation to the controversy regarding Origen's eschatological views, which were shared by John's teacher, Diodore, and his fellow student Theodore of Mopsuestia. At *In I Cor.* PG 61,75, immediately after mentioning the κόλασις αἰώνιος, John sets forth the objections of an imagined interlocutor concerning the absence of a fixed limit or τέλος to punishment. This was a live issue to which John had surely been sensitised in the school of Diodore, where both Diodore and Theodore thought that punishments in the other world will come to an end, precisely because punishments will be commensurate with one's sins: “How can one continue to speak of justice, if punishment has no limit?” John provides no answer in fact: “Once God has established something, be persuaded by his statements, and do not submit what has been said [in Scripture] to human reasoning.” John resorts to the will of God and revelation in Scripture. He evidently presupposes that Scripture reveals the limitlessness of punishments, albeit he himself was linguistically well aware that this is in fact not the case. *Ibid.* 193, John returns to the issue of the duration of future punishments. He claims that τιμωρίαι are not such as “to have a limit [πέρας λαμβάνειν] and be abolished [καταλύεσθαι],” but rather κόλασις is αἰώνιος, and κολάσεις in the future aeon μένουσιν διηνεκῶς, “abide continually.” It is to be noticed that John is not using a rigorous terminology; he employs τιμωρία and κόλασις as synonyms, whereas only the latter—notably, the one used in the NT—is a punishment in the interest of those punished. The objection then comes: but there will be an end of the αἰῶνες, and therefore also of αἰώνιος punishment. This objection proves that there were many who interpreted αἰώνιος as “pertaining to the future αἰών” and not in the sense of absolutely “eternal.” Among these many, as I have pointed out in the past sections, there was

also John's teacher, Diodore. John's reply to this, in turn, is that, at the end of the αἰῶνες, there will be the universal Judgement, although he neglects to mention that it is precisely at the universal Judgement that sinners will be sent to the πῦρ αἰώνιον (in the Origenian perspective, at the end of the αἰῶνες there is rather the ἀϊδιότης of the apokatastasis). He seems to take the end of the αἰῶνες as the end of time or of this world, which contradicts the meaning of αἰώνιος as "eternal." But John does not worry about contradictions, since this is not a philosophical treatise, but a paraenetic piece. Nor does he conclude the passage with this picture of the Judgement, but, after threatening an eternal punishment, he turns to consolation and exhortation, and shows that God's mercy forgives even those who deserve this punishment: he who has fallen can rise again; wounds can be healed, however severe, because the Physician is omnipotent and, "even if they have reached the extreme of evilness, he opens up for us many routes to salvation." John exhorts sinners as follows: "do not despair: for even though your wounds are difficult to be healed, they are *not incurable*. Our Physician can: so skilled is he," echoing Origen's statement that "no being is incurable for the One who has created it." The omnipotence of Christ-Physician is a tenet of Origen's thought, who, as I have argued, corrected Plato on this point by saying that no being is incurable for the One who has created it, Christ-Logos. Chrysostom seems here to be reminiscent of Origen's statement. In his paraenesis, John maintains that Christ heals sinners by means of their own good deeds: pardoning of others, almsgiving, prayer, confession of sins, contrition, endurance of misfortune, pity for the unfortunate. Chrysostom, who was aware of expedient rhetorical devices, is clearly using the concept of eternal punishment as a threat, within his paraenetic discourse.

John reflects the same debate with the supporters of apokatastasis also in *In II Thess.* PG 62,479, in which he moreover attests to the widespread presence of this doctrine in Christianity at this time:

There are many people who place their hopes, not in abstaining from evil, but in the belief that Gehenna is not so terrible as it is said to be, but rather milder than what is threatened, and *temporary, not eternal*, and they offer many philosophical reasons for this view. Now, I, however, can state on many grounds, and can infer from the very words of Scripture concerning Gehenna, that not only is it not milder than what is threatened, but rather much harsher. But I shall not treat this argument here. [...] To realise that *it is not temporary*, listen to Paul when he says, concerning those who do not know God, that they will encounter the punishment of αἰώνιος destruction. How, then, can that which is αἰώνιος be temporary? He says: 'far from the face of the Lord.' What does this mean? What is there of mildness in these words?

Here John would seem to want hearers take αἰώνιος as meaning “eternal,”<sup>609</sup> although he is himself aware of the polysemy of this adjective. It is also significant that he ascribes to the supporters of apokatastasis a philosophical profile, whereas he himself claims to ground his own view in Scripture. John’s hortatory aim is clear: one should not place one’s hopes in the limitedness of future punishment, but should rather avoid doing evil. This was also Origen’s argument: it is better for an immature person to believe that punishment will be eternal and to avoid sinning, than to believe that punishment will not be eternal and to sin. Furthermore, the threat of eternal punishment is directed against those “who do not know God.” This reinforces the impression that John may have personally admitted of a nuanced form of apokatastasis, at least for all Christians, even though in his hortatory works he availed himself of the threat of eternal punishment as a pedagogical strategy.

John’s own linguistic use, with αἰδιος referring only to life and blessedness and never to punishment—while his use of ἀθάνατον has a parallel in Evagrius—and αἰώνιος referring both to blessedness and to punishment, is not against a belief in the doctrine of apokatastasis, and indeed it is not to be ruled out that he personally embraced it, at least in the limited form comprehensive of all Christians. In addition to his use of αἰώνιος and αἰδιος, another linguistic use of John’s seems to me revealing. Origen employed the expression “our ancient homeland,” ἡ ἀρχαία ἡμῶν πατρίς, to designate the homeland to which all human beings will return in the eventual apokatastasis. Now, John is the only Father who takes it up along with a few other faithful Origenians, such as the author of the *De Trinitate* ascribed to Didymus (PG 39,697,47),<sup>610</sup> Athanasius (*Quaest. ad Ant.* PG 28,620C: “We have fallen down from *our ancient homeland* and now we implore God to *restore* [ἀποκαταστήσαι] us into the place from which we were expelled”), Gregory of Nyssa (*C. Eun.* 3,1,51), and Basil (*Hom. in Hex.* 6,1; *De Spir. Sanct.* 27,66; *Hom. in Lacisis*, PG 31,1456).<sup>611</sup> I suspect that Origen’s influence is detectable in John, too, including the soteriological field; Diodore’s mediation at least is certainly to be taken into account.

<sup>609</sup> The same would seem to be the case with *In Hebr.* PG 63,134, where John insists on αἰώνιος Gehenna, an expression that per se does not convey any sense of eternity.

<sup>610</sup> Panayiotis Tzamalikos thinks that this treatise was in fact written by Cassian the Sabaite in the sixth century. According to István Perczel, this work is by Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite. See below, Ch. 4, sections on Ps. Dionysius and Cassian.

<sup>611</sup> See Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy*, 290 n. 417.



Like Origen himself, John considered the threat of an eternal punishment useful for those who are spiritually immature, and thus he availed himself of it in his homilies. What he says in *Hom. in IThess.* 8, PG 62,441–443 must be read precisely in this pastoral and paraenetic light. Here he denies that otherworldly torments are only threats (οὐδὲν τούτων ἔσται [...] πρὸς ἀπειλὴν μόνον, ἵνα σωφρονώμεν). And this is understandable, since the value of threats vanishes if they are perceived as such. Moreover, John is speaking here of punishments in the next world, but not of eternal punishments. He insists that educative punishment will indeed take place: “And if, instead, we are not virtuous, but we remain in vice, tell me please, won’t God punish us [οὐκ ἐπάξει τὴν κόλασιν]?” This is in fact a point on which Origen, Nyssen, Evagrius, and all supporters of apokatastasis agree. But this punishment is educative; it is κόλασις, not τιμωρία, and it will come to an end. Of course John insists that otherworldly punishment is not a mere threat but will indeed take place, that his flock may be stimulated to pursue virtue and σωφρονεῖν. It is a diabolic thought, a σατανικός λογισμός, to suppose that there will be absolutely no punishment (πάντως) and what is said about future punishment is only aimed at threatening it, ἀπειλῆς ἕνεκεν. Such a supposition makes people lazy in the pursuit of virtue. Now, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and other supporters of apokatastasis also believed that future torments will indeed take place, and Origen too believed that threats are useful. Origen and his followers, just as Diodore, the teacher of John, believed that punishments will have an end, not that they will not take place. John himself here does not even mention their eternity; he is concerned with their reality against the thesis that they are simply threats.<sup>612</sup>

John may have been in contact with Evagrius, another defender of apokatastasis. This contact took place perhaps even through Heraclides, a disciple of Evagrius’s whom John created archbishop of Ephesus in 401. In his *Ad neophytos*, later cited by Julian of Aelclanum, John claims that newborn babies should not be baptised in order to save them from punishment, as though

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<sup>612</sup> Sometimes John, compelled by his pastoral concerns, feels the need to declare that punishment in hell will be eternal, not without delivering himself to blatant contradictions. For instance, in *Hom.* 9, he is commenting on 1 Cor 3:15: “He will be saved but, as it were, through fire.” In order to maintain the eternity of punishment, he claims that to be saved here does not mean salvation, but damnation (*sic*): “When Scripture says ‘He will be saved,’ it does not mean other than the prolongation of his punishment, as though it were saying: ‘He will continue to be punished uninterruptedly.’” John’s paraenetic intention is here stronger than logic.

they were contaminated by sin, but to increase their holiness and grant them the access to Christ's fraternity. This position, which is obviously far from that of Augustine shortly afterwards, is rather close to that of Gregory of Nyssa, as it is manifest especially from his *De infantibus*. In *Expl. in Ps.* PG 55,284, John comments on the nature of forgiveness that is employed by Jesus for the purpose of conversion: had he not forgiven the adulteress, Matthew, the robber, "and every sinner," he would not have been able to achieve their conversion. In *Hom. in ICor.* 41 John comments on the passage that Gregory of Nyssa, too, had in mind in the final part of his *De anima*, in which he presents the eventual apokatastasis as the realisation of the resurrection and its topping off. It is the passage in which Paul's interlocutor asked how and with which body the dead will rise, and Paul replies that the wheat seed must die in order to be vivified. In ch. 2, John insists on the "order" in the resurrection, an expression that is present in Paul and on which both Origen in *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* and Gregory of Nyssa in *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius* insisted a great deal as well, interpreting it as evidence of the gradation that will be observed in the attainment of blessedness, and that will depend on each one's merits. Likewise, John explains that not all those who are in the Kingdom have the same glory, and not all those who are in Gehenna have the same suffering. Exactly like Origen, who notes that the announcement of vivification in the Bible comes after that of death and never the reverse, John assures that, thanks to God's salvific economy, "our situation always proceeds towards the better," ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον αἰεὶ τὰ ἡμέτερα πρόεισιν. Thus, when anyone abandons this earthly life, we should not be afflicted. Indeed, the remainder of the work consists in a series of *consolationes*, depending on the kind of person one has lost: a parent, a wife, a child, a newborn baby, and so on. The last case was treated by Gregory of Nyssa in his *De infantibus praemature abrep-tis*.

Among the consolatory lore that John provides, particular weight must be attached, in the present investigation, to the section that begins from col. 361A. Here, John replies to an objection from his imaginary interlocutor, who alludes to the fear of damnation: "This is exactly the reason why I am desperate: because he died while he was in sin!" The presupposition is that if one dies in sin, there is no remedy, because no spiritual growth or improvement are admitted of in the next world. But John replies:

Even if he has died while he was in sin [ἁμαρτωλός], even for this we should be happy [δεῖ χαίρειν], because *sins have been broken off* [ἐνεκόπη τὰ ἁμαρτήματα] and *have finished to add vice to vice* [οὐ προσέθηκεν τῇ κακίῃ].

This argument was already used by Methodius and an Origenian author such as Nyssen: physical death is a good disposed by God in his Providence in order to put a limit to sin and therefore impose a limit also on the otherworldly punishment of sin: “to avoid an eternity of damnation,” in Methodius’s expression. John then goes on to explain what can be done on earth to improve the situation of the dead:

It is necessary to *help him*, insofar as possible, and not with tears, but with *prayers, supplications, almsgiving, offers*. These have not been excogitated vainly, without a reason, and it is not accidental that *in the celebration of the divine mysteries we commemorate the dead and go ahead to speak on behalf of them, praying the Lamb who lies there, who has taken upon himself the sin of the world*, but we do so in order that, by means of all this, *they may have comfort and solace*. It is not in vain that the celebrator, near the altar, during the accomplishment of the mysteries that inspire reverential fear, proclaims aloud: “For all those who have died in Christ and for those who commemorate them.” For if commemorations were not in behalf of them, these things would not even be said.

The situation of the dead is not inexorably fixed at the end of their earthly life, but can still improve on the other side, thanks to the help of the church and the believers. The insistence on the idea of being dead in Christ suggests, once again, that John may have restricted apokatastasis to Christians. This is why immediately afterwards, in ch. 5, he exhorts the believers to pray for the dead in order to improve their situation; here too, indeed, the whole of his argument is paraenetic:

Therefore, let us help them, and celebrate the commemoration on their behalf: for, if the sacrifice offered by their father was able to purify Job’s children, why do you doubt that *we too, by acting in behalf of the dead, will be able to bring them comfort and help*? For God is used to bestowing a grace upon someone even by virtue of someone else [...] Thus, let us not get tired to help the dead and to pray for them. *For the perspective is the common* [κοινόν] *purification of the whole humanity* [τῆς οἰκουμένης].

The last sentence is particularly important: literally, John states that “the common purification of the whole humanity *κεῖται*,” that is, “is foreseen, is expected, is established.” The use of *κεῖμαι* in this meaning is very widespread: for instance, “for such crimes death penalty is foreseen / established [*κεῖται*],” “for such deserts a reward is foreseen / established [*κεῖται*],” or again it is said that something “is expected / established [*κεῖται*]” for the future, or “awaits” someone (*κεῖται* for someone), and the like, in reference to something that is established and thus awaited for the future in given cases. John is therefore announcing that the end, what is established for the future (obviously by God), is that the whole of humanity will be purified in a

common purification, a κοινὸν τῆς οἰκουμένης καθάρσιον.<sup>613</sup> This is clearly Origen's, and Diodore's, and Theodore's eschatological perspective. Here, John does not even restrict this purification to the Christians, but extends it to the whole of humanity. This is the *universalistic* end of the prayers of the church (which also makes it clear that John's insistence on the eternity of punishment is part of his pastoral rhetorical strategy which makes use of threats for his flock):

For this reason, then, we *pray with confidence* [θαρρῶντες] *for the whole of humanity* [τῆς οἰκουμένης], mentioning the dead along with the martyrs, the confessors, the priests. For all of *us are one and the same body*, even though some limbs are more illustrious than others, and it is possible to *put together forgiveness* [συγγνώμην συναγαγεῖν] *for the dead, in every way*, with prayers, with gifts offered on their behalf, and thanks to those who are mentioned together with them [sc. the saints who work as intercessors]. Thus, why do you grieve, why do you complain, since it is possible to *put together so great a forgiveness* [τοσαύτην συγγνώμην συναγαγεῖν] *for the dead*?

John would seem to be inconsistent, since first he speaks of the purification of the whole of humanity and of prayers for the whole of humanity, then of "all of us" as being one and the same body. The latter metaphor would seem to apply to the church, all the more in that John shortly earlier had spoken of those who have died in Christ. But the equation of the church with Christ's body and of Christ's body with the whole of humanity brings about the identification of the church with all humanity, at least in the eschatological scenario. John draws on this equation (which was Origen's and Gregory Nyssen's) here, when he speaks of the church that prays *with confidence* for the whole of humanity and foresees the purification of the whole of humanity.

Moreover, shortly afterwards John reminds his fictitious interlocutor, who has lost a dear one, that the latter has not fallen into the hands of a person whatsoever, "or an enemy, or one who plots against him, but into the hands of God, God who has created him, who *cares for him much more than you do* [μᾶλλον σου κηδόμενος] and knows very well what is beneficial to him [τὸ συμφέρον]." John, like the *Apocalypse of Peter*,<sup>614</sup> claims that God, more than anyone else, wants sinners to be saved. God considers what is useful

<sup>613</sup> Καθάρσιον as "purification" and more specifically as "factor of purification" is attested already in Clement, *Protr.* 1. In John Chrysostom it is often attested in the sense of factor of purification of one's sins, e.g. in *Ep.* 117,659B; *Hom. in Matth.* 73,2. See also similar examples in Gregory Nyssen, *I Hom. in Cant.* PG 44,776C; *ibid.* 780A; *Vit. Mos.* PG 44,376C.

<sup>614</sup> See above the section devoted to this work.

and helpful for each one, including sinners; for them, punishment is useful: clearly, if it is to be useful, it must be therapeutic and purifying, not merely retributive. Here John is in line with the Origenian tradition, and with his teacher Diodore.

John appeals to St. Paul concerning the value of intercessory prayer; he never induces people to give up praying for those who are in hell and are without hope, distinguishing them from those who are in purgatory and thus can profit from prayers. He only admits of either case: either one has died in the grace of God, and thus those who remain should rejoice, because s/he is in a better state, in Paradise, or one has died in sin, and thus those who remain here should pray, and give alms, and so on, in order to improve his or her condition in the other world. It is clear that John regards this condition as improvable, and thinks that prayer can purify those in hell, who died in sin. The verb is *καθαίρω*, the same applied to the purifying fire. Such a purification, John explains, will have as a result that God will grant them grace (*χαρίζεσθαι*). For it is possible to obtain “so great a forgiveness” for the dead, by all means, with prayers, offerings, and the intercession of saints. What inspires this confidence is that forgiveness is given by God, who has also created the person who needs forgiveness, and loves her more than anyone could.

The universalistic value of *οἰκουμένη*, which John uses twice here—in reference to the envisaged purification of the whole humanity and to the church’s prayers for the whole humanity—is clear.<sup>615</sup> It is the whole world inhabited by human beings, thus humanity itself. It is a word that John often uses, also in other homilies. The eschatological perspective of the purification of the whole of humanity is taken up in the conclusion of the homily itself: “If we think and act in this wise way, we shall attain both happiness in the present world and the crown in the future, and what follows,” *καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς*. The last Greek word can mean “and so on, et cetera,” but also “what comes after,” what will come after the attainment of the crowns in the future world. This could allude again to the eventual, realised purification of the whole of humanity. The subsequent homily (42 on 1 Corinthians), too, ends up in the very same way,<sup>616</sup> after the mention of all the goods that await those who love God: “with confidence we shall also be able to enjoy the goods that are kept apart [*ἀποκειμένων*] for those

<sup>615</sup> See also Lampe, 944, s.v. *οἰκουμένη*.

<sup>616</sup> The formula *καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς* occurs 166 times in all of in John Chrysostom’s writings, at least a half of which at the end of a homily.

who love God, which may all of us attain, and what comes after [καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς].” A compound of *κεῖμαι* is here used again to indicate what is to be expected, what awaits, what is established; it is the same verb that is used in the preceding homily. In both homilies it appears in an eschatological context, and seems to refer to what is to be expected for the *telos*.

In *Hom. in Phil.* 174 ff. John describes the conversion of Cornelius operated by Peter (ch. 2), and in ch. 3 interprets its details, especially the declaration that Cornelius's prayers and almsgivings have been taken into account by God. Here, he remarks: “Can you see how great is the power of almsgiving, both in the first exposition and here? In the former, it has been able to liberate people from death in the present world [προσκαίρου], in the latter *from death in the future world* [αἰωνίου]. *And it has even been able to open up the gates of heaven.*” Almsgiving rescues people from death in the world to come, from hell, as John shows in his homilies on 1 Corinthians as well. The believers ought to pray and give alms for those who are dead in sins and will rescue them from hell. “Nothing is more valuable than almsgiving.” Almsgiving is tantamount to “the vanishing of sins.” The river that flows from the source of almsgiving

goes toward heaven, toward life in the next world. If death comes across it, it is consumed by that spring like a sparkle [...] What is more, the spring of almsgiving *extinguishes the river of fire (of hell)* as though it were a sparkle; it *suffocates the worm (of hell)* as though it were nothing. Those who have almsgiving *do not know the gnashing of teeth*. If any drop of that water falls onto the *chains (of the prison of hell)*, it *destroys them*, and even in case it should flow upon the *furnaces (of hell)*, it *extinguishes them all*.

Even the fire of hell, the Biblical πῦρ αἰώνιον and πῦρ ἄσβεστον, can be put out by alms, which the living can give for the dead; alms can likewise kill the “worm that does not die.” John is clearly using the NT images of hell, including the “gnashing of teeth.” Now, all these things, which are supposed to be eternal, are said to be eliminated by alms. John, when he says that alms can rescue the dead from torments, undoubtedly means the torments of hell. Indeed, immediately afterwards he speaks of alms aimed at saving those dead who most need mercy (τοὺς μάλιστα ἐπιδεομένους ἐλέους), and would be condemned to the worst torments. Another hell image that John evokes soon after is that of the insuperable abyss that separates the good from the damned. Now, this abyss too can be overcome by almsgiving: “If you open the mouth of this spring, the mouth of God's own spring will be such as to *overcome every abyss* [πάσαν ἄβυσσον νικῆσαι]. God simply waits to receive a hint from us, and pours out the goods from his treasures.” Yet another image of hell is evoked by John only in order to declare that it is

defeated by alms: that of the serpent/dragon, a personification of the devil and evil: the merciful soul has in itself the spring of the true gold; “the soul that produces this gold is more precious than any land rich in gold-bearing mines; this gold becomes an ornament for the church of God. With this gold the dagger of the Spirit is fabricated, the dagger through which *the serpent is decapitated* [ὁ δράκων ἀποτέμνεται].”

Alms save from hell both those who have given them in their life and those who are dead and for whom others, still on earth, give alms, in that this preserves them from the eternal future punishment, even those who are already dead and for whom prayers and alms are offered, which rescue them, not from purgatory, which John does not distinguish from hell, but from hell itself. This is indicated by the very Biblical images that John uses: the serpent, the abyss, the fire that cannot be extinguished, the worm that does not die, and the gnashing of teeth, which is ascribed to Gehenna in the Gospels.

In *Hom. in Col.* 3, commenting on the Christological hymn in Col 1:15–20, John emphasises the perfect and universally salvific value of Christ’s cross. After glorifying the perfect divinity of Christ, John praises Christ’s own *φιλανθρωπία*, which has made possible the union of Christ with the whole of humanity. Christ, therefore, can be the “head of the body of the church” and our brother at the same time, in that he has made himself similar to us in every respect, and has united himself to us (*ἦνωσεν ἑαυτὸν ἡμῖν*). John repeats here the assimilation between the church and the whole of humanity that I have already highlighted in his writings and that he shares with Gregory of Nyssa (in *In illud*). “Speaking of church,” John explains, “Paul means *the whole of humanity*”: *τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἔλαβεν ἀντὶ τοῦ παντὸς ἀνθρώπων γένους*. This leads to the interpretation of Paul’s words in a universalistic sense and opens up a path to apokatastasis. If the body of Christ, the church, is finally saved and united to God when God is “all in all,” and if in turn the church is the whole of humanity, then it is certain that the whole of humanity will be saved. This conclusion was also reached by Gregory of Nyssa in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*.

As the Gospel of John says, “all of us have received from his plenitude,” that is, from Christ’s divinity, the resurrection, of which Christ is the first fruits and which is presented by Chrysostom as salvation. The realisation of human salvation is due to an operation of Christ, “in essence” (*οὐσίᾳ*). For this reason, the reconciliation and pacification could be accomplished “in a perfect and complete manner,” *τελείως*. It has been accomplished by means of Christ, his blood, and his cross, and is effective on “the whole totality” (note the redundancy); the pacification involves all of humanity

and all angels. The vocabulary of totality is extremely emphasised, with four key-terms in less than three lines: *πάν, τὸ πλήρωμα, τὰ πάντα, and πάντα*:

In Christ God has wanted to inhabit *the whole totality* [*πάν τὸ πλήρωμα*], and through him to reconcile *all beings* [*ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα*] to himself, pacifying *all* [*εἰρηνοποιήσας πάντα*] to himself through his blood, both those on earth and those in heaven.

Christ “accomplished everything, not by means of words, but by means of giving himself for the sake of the reconciliation.” By offering himself in sacrifice, Christ sanctified all humans (*πάντας ἡμᾶς ἡγίασε*), and offered them as a sacrifice. The effect, John says with Paul, is that “*all the beings* [*πάντα*] of heaven and earth are recapitulated [*ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι*] in Christ,” the whole of humanity and all angels, just as all beings have been created in Christ, by means of Christ, and for Christ. Christ has brought back to heaven humanity, which had become an enemy of heaven, and has accomplished a “profound peace.” Christ has provided angels with a reason for rejoicing and celebrating: the conversion of the whole of humanity. If they rejoice in the conversion of just one sinner, what their feast will be for the return of the whole of humanity, the whole body of Christ. This reminds me of the common feast of humans and angels in apokatastasis, which Gregory of Nyssa described in *De anima et resurrectione* drawing inspiration from Origen. The use of *κατορθόω* and *κατόρθωσις* to designate the acquisition of this condition in the sentence *ταῦτα πάντα ἢ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἰσχύς κατώρθωσε* is telling, being this the same terminology as Origen, Marcellus, Eusebius, and other supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis apply to the *telos* itself. The salvific effectiveness of Christ’s sacrifice is universal.<sup>617</sup> John expressly affirms the universality of the reconciliation that this sacrifice produces in the whole body of Christ, the whole of humanity. For he affirms that Christ’s sacrifice has brought about not only peace, but peace “for all”: “The One who is the head of the church does not simply say, ‘Peace to you,’ but ‘Peace to all [*πᾶσι*],’ on account of the good order, harmony, and peace of *all* [*ἀπάντων*].” John’s subsequent remark has a typical Origenian flavour:

In my view, there will be no peace unless *all rational beings have peace* [*πάντες οἱ λογικοί*].

The eventual peace of all rational creatures is the final apokatastasis of all the *logika* theorised by Origen. What is more, it is also declared that this

<sup>617</sup> For this notion in Origen see my “The Universal and Eternal Validity.”



end is achieved by the power of God and Christ's work. This theo- and Christocentrism, too, was a fundamental characteristic of Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis, as I have demonstrated.<sup>618</sup> I agree with Krolokowsky that for John "in Cristo, Dio ha definitivamente dato tutto per compiere l'opera della salvezza, per cui questa *salvezza* possiede tutte le caratteristiche che la rendono *universale*."<sup>619</sup> A further hint comes from John's homily Εἰς τὸ μὴ οὕτως σφοδρῶς θρηνεῖν τοὺς τελευτώντας (PG 60.725; cf. Photius *Bibl. cod.* 277, p. 525a), in which he takes over Origen's, Methodius's, and Gregory of Nyssa's idea that physical death is the point of departure of human salvation (ἀφορμὴ σωτηρίας). John adds: "If the person who died is a just, rejoice, because she can go to her Lord with confidence; if she is a sinner, do not be afflicted: she has been liberated from the addition of sins, and this is a gain [ἐκέρδησεν οἷς τὴν προσθήκην τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων ἀφῆρηται]." Of course this can be a gain only if otherworldly punishments are deemed commensurate with sins, and not eternal.

*Universalism in Paschal Homilies Ascribed to Chrysostom;  
Proclus of Constantinople and Chrysologus*

Among the Paschal homilies ascribed to John Chrysostom some are authentic—at least one—, while others are not.<sup>620</sup> Some of these homilies are relevant to the present investigation, even though at least one of them is

<sup>618</sup> See my "Origen and Apokatastasis: A Reassessment," and here above the section on Origen.

<sup>619</sup> K. Krolokowsky, "La precedenza ontologico-soteriologica di Gesù Cristo nel commento all'Inno di Col 1,15–20 di Giovanni Crisostomo," in *Giovanni Crisostomo. Oriente e occidente*, 443–452.

<sup>620</sup> Among all Paschal homilies listed under John Chrysostom in TLG, only one is considered to be authentic: *In S. Pascha* PG 52,765–772. The others, which are deemed spurious, are: *Sermo catecheticus in S. Pascha* PG 59,721–724; *In S. Pascha* sermo 1 (perhaps by Apollinaris of Laodicaea), edited by P. Nautin, *Homélies pascales*, vol. 2, Sources Chrétiennes 36 (Paris, 1953), 55–75; *In S. Pascha* sermo 2 (perhaps by Apollinaris), edited by Nautin, *ibid.* 77–101; *In S. Pascha* sermo 3 (perhaps by Apollinaris), edited by Nautin, *ibid.* 103–117; *In S. Pascha* sermo 4, PG 59, 731–732; *In S. Pascha* sermo 5, PG 59,731–736; *In S. Pascha* sermo 6, edited by Nautin, *Homélies pascales*, vol. 1 Sources Chrétiennes 27 (Paris, 1950), 117–191; *In S. Pascha* sermo 7, edited by F. Floëri and P. Nautin, *Homélies pascales*, vol. 3, Sources Chrétiennes 48 (Paris, 1957), 111–173; *In S. Pascha*, edited by C. Baur, "Drei unedierte Festpredigten aus der Zeit der nestorianischen Streitigkeiten," *Traditio* 9 (1953) 108–110; *In S. Pascha*, edited by P. Allen–C. Datema, "Text and Tradition of Two Easter Homilies of Ps. Chrysostom," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 30 (1981) 98–102.

probably spurious and perhaps ascribable to Hippolytus,<sup>621</sup> a third-century Roman monarchian, or Callistus, the bishop of Rome. This homily entirely focuses on Christ's redemptive passion, which achieves the opposite of Adam's fall. In a couple of these homilies redemption is placed on the anniversary of Jesus's passion and is seen as a new creation, which cancels sins and brings about universal restoration.

In Homily 3 *In s. Pascha*, ascribed to John, in ch. 1 the focus is immediately on "the salvation of the human beings" which is presented as a result of Christ's Easter. Communion with Christ, which is indispensable to reach salvation, is said to be attained by means of the "life according to Christ" (ch. 5). After several allegorical-spiritual interpretations of prescriptions for the Passover, the author allegorises the seventh day as the liberation from the body and the return to the Lord. More explicitly, in the short Homily 4 *In s. Pascha* ascribed to John Chrysostom, Easter is presented as a "perfect liberation," τελεία ἀπόλυσις, not only from death, but also "from the enslavement to the devil," ἐκ τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου δουλείας. The Son is sent to be "the Saviour of the cosmos," who eliminates and destroys the sin of the cosmos (the notion is emphasised by means of an iteration: ἀμαρτίαν ἀφήρει, ἀμαρτίαν ἔλυσεν), and as a consequence destroys death (θάνατον σὺν αὐτῇ καταλύσας). Thus, not only death is destroyed, but also sin, and death is destroyed precisely in that sin, its origin, is eliminated first. Now, the elimination of sin is salvation. Indeed, the author insists that, in order to participate in Christ, in which salvation consists, it is necessary to attain *apatheia*, the same condition that was also envisaged by Origen and Gregory Nyssen.

Universalistic soteriology, grounded in Christ's work, is even clearer in Homily 1 *In s. Pascha* ascribed to John, but possibly authored by Apollinaris of Laodicea (which would speak in favour of Apollinaris' own adhesion to the doctrine of apokatastasis). Christ is there said to have died, not only for the physical resurrection of all humans, but also for their salvation (chs. 2–3): "Easter is the cause of the *salvation of all human beings* [τῆς ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων σωτηρίας ἐστὶν αἴτιον], beginning from the protoplast." This concept is emphasised and hammered home over and over again in chs.

<sup>621</sup> On the identity of "Hippolytus" see CPG 1,1870; Aa.Vv., *Ricerche su Ippolito* (Rome, 1977); J.A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West. The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford, 2002). J. Frickel, *Das Dunkel um Hippolyt von Rom* (Graz, 1988) has argued for the identity of Hippolytus of Rome and Hippolytus the author of the first Christian commentary on the Song of Songs; there was only one Hippolytus who lived roughly at the time of Origen.

13, 14, 18, and 22: “for the salvation of *all humanity*” (εἰς σωτηρίαν ἀπάσης τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος), “the salvation of the *whole cosmos*” (τὴν ἀπαντὸς τοῦ κόσμου σωτηρίαν), “the *whole of humanity*” (τῆς πάσης ἀνθρωπότητος), and “for the salvation of the human beings” (εἰς τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων σωτηρίαν).

In another oration *In s. Pascha* ascribed to John and surely due to an anti-“Arian” author,<sup>622</sup> the notion is emphasised that Christ’s death has overcome not only death, since it will produce the resurrection of all, but also the devil and all demons. Satan will be imprisoned in Hades. Adam’s and Eve’s fall is opposed to the restoration brought about by Christ and Mary. Thanks to the two latter, the two former are justified and can enter Paradise again. Gregory of Nyssa’s motif of the deception of the devil is here found again: with his piece of wood (the cross), Christ deceives the devil, who had deceived Adam by means of a piece of wood. Also, the author of this homily shares with Gregory of Nyssa and with Origen the idea of a profound continuity between the present and the future life, so that one can be cured *after* death as well, after the *pathos* of death. By dying on the cross, Christ “healed the illnesses of human souls,” the ψυχικαὶ νόσοι, which are sins, “and has dispelled the demons that ruin the soul,” the ψυχοφθόροι δαίμονες.

The author of another homily ascribed to John Chrysostom<sup>623</sup> in a preamble insists on God’s maternal mercy (εὐσπλαγχνία) and love for humanity, and on the salvific action of Christ, who “has saved the cosmos.” Christ has saved Adam, who was enslaved to sin and death; he has opened the gates of hell and has deceived the demons. A variation of Gregory of Nyssa’s theme of the deceit of the devil returns here. This homily insists on the importance of Christ’s descent to hell, by which “the king has *saved every prisoner* [πᾶσαν τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν ἀπέσωσε] and, qua their master, liberates his own creatures [τὰ οἰκεῖα δεσποτικῶς ἐλευθεροῖ δημιουργήματα].” Thanatos is deprived of his power and utters a long lament.

In the sixth homily *In S. Pascha* ascribed to John Chrysostom universalism is clear. Easter is described both as a day of life and light and, in ch. 2, as healing and ascent. In ch. 3 the author overtly affirms that with his sacrifice, typologically anticipated in the Jewish Passover, Christ has produced τὴν καθόλου σωτηρίαν τῶν ὅλων, “the *universal salvation of all*.” These “all” include angels and fallen angels, who will participate in the eschatological feast of all the cosmos. The author also offers an allegorical and typological exegesis of the Biblical narrative concerning the Passover, and in ch. 17 he too states

<sup>622</sup> Ed. Baur, “Drei unedierte Festpredigten,” 108–110.

<sup>623</sup> Ed. Allen–Datema, “Text and Tradition,” 98–102.

that Christ's Easter is on the same day as the day of creation, so to draw a close connection between the first creation and the new creation in Easter. In ch. 18 John's declaration is quoted on the lamb who "takes away the sin of the world" and in ch. 38 it is claimed that Jesus has truly spared (ἐσκέπασας ἀληθῶς) human beings "the total perdition" (ἀπὸ τῆς πολλῆς ἀπολείας).

This author expresses an idea (ch. 39) that is found in Gregory of Nyssa's *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, but also in John Chrysostom's aforementioned equation between the church and humanity: the whole of humanity (ἅλοι) constitutes the body of Christ as a single mass. Φύραμα is the same term used here and by Gregory. Christ has obtained the following benefits for humanity: "rescue from slavery, liberation from the old necessity [sc. death], honour of the adoption into children, spring of the remission of sins, *immortal life truly in all* [ἄθάνατος ἀληθῶς ἐν πᾶσι ζωή]" (ch. 44). Christ is said to have defeated, not only death, but also sin: τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἀναιρεθῆναι (ch. 47), and to have achieved the liberation from passions for human beings (ch. 49). Christ is depicted as the healer of the human beings, in that he heals them from sins. An antithetical parallel is drawn in chs. 49 and 50 ff. between the tree of the fall and that of redemption, which gives the σωτηρίαν αἰώνιον. The author describes the Cross of Christ in a cosmic perspective, similar to that adopted by Gregory of Nyssa, as embracing everything, and insists on its universally salvific value, so that it becomes a link between heaven and earth, and the connection of all. The same cosmic role of Christ is also underscored in ch. 52, in which he is said to have "filled the whole universe [τὸ πᾶν] with himself." So great is the uniting function of the Cross that the author can claim that it is τῆς ποικίλης καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης οὐσίας συνεκτικόν. This section, in which the Cross is described as a sign of victory and universal glory, is particularly lengthy and emphatic.

The universality of the salvation provided by Christ is mentioned again in ch. 56, in which it is highlighted that it extends even to hell: "in order to *save all beings* [τὰ πάντα σωθῆ], that *not even hell may remain deprived of God's presence*." This idea, as I have pointed out, was already present in Clement of Alexandria. The universality of salvation is hammered home again in ch. 58: ἵνα ὅλον καὶ πᾶν σώσῃ τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος, "in order to save all humanity, entirely." Just as Gregory Nyssen's *De anima et resurrectione*, this homily also ends with the depiction of the glorious "spiritual feast" of apokatastasis, the "divine Easter" that is declared to be κοινὸν τῶν ὅλων, "common to *all together*," a κοσμικὸν πανηγύρισμα, "*universal celebration*" and τοῦ παντὸς χαρά, "*universal joy*," in which *all*, πάντες, will participate and from which ἐκβάλλεται οὐδεὶς, "*no one* will be excluded," either because of an extinguished lamp, or because of the lack of a nuptial robe; for "the souls'

lamps will no longer go out.” This will be the case only after the submission of all enemies on the part of Christ. This outcome is also the object of the author’s prayer in ch. 63, in which 1Cor 15:28 provides the main Scriptural foundation. This was also the main Scriptural foundation for Origen’s and Gregory Nyssen’s theory of apokatastasis.

The short *Catechetical Oration on the Holy Easter* insists from the beginning on the concept of Easter as a joyous feast which encompasses all, those who arrive first and those who arrive late. All are invited to participate in the joy of the day in which Christ, after descending into hell, “has punished hell.” Christ has been resurrected and demons have fallen down, πεπτώκασι δαίμονες. The idea of Easter as an eschatological feast reappears in the homily *In s. Pascha* in PG 52,765–772. It begins precisely with the image of the common feast of humans and angels that is made possible by Easter, so that the present Easter feast is an anticipation of the eschatological feast of apokatastasis. As it is the case with other Paschal homilies ascribed to John, in the present one, too, it is declared that Christ with his cross and his descent to hell has defeated, not only death, but also the devil (ἡ τοῦ διαβόλου ἡττα). The tyranny of the devil over humans, exerted by means of sin, is dissolved by Christ: καταλύεται τοῦ διαβόλου ἡ τυραννίς. This is why the death that Christ has annihilated is not merely physical death, which has become a sleep ending with the resurrection, but the death of the soul, the death of sin, hell, “the bad death of sinners,” θάνατος ἀμαρτωλῶν πονηρός. Christ liberates sinners from hell. For Christ—with a motif that I have already highlighted in Gregory of Nyssa and other Paschal homilies—“has destroyed the demons’ deceit,” has overcome the devil, and has opened up the path to life and salvation. It is particularly emphasised that Christ’s aim was not simply human beings’ life, but especially their salvation. Just as through a virgin and a piece of wood and death the devil defeated Adam, so also through a virgin and a piece of wood and his own death Christ defeated the devil and his triumph is also a victory over the ancient fall. With this, Christ has attained the salvation of the human universe, τῇ σωτηρίᾳ τῆς οἰκουμένης, of the whole humanity, τῇ σωτηρίᾳ τοῦ κοινοῦ γένους τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Christ has liberated humanity from the tyranny of the devil (τῆς τοῦ διαβόλου τυραννίδος ἐλευθερώσας) and has restored it to its ancient innocence and nobility: τὴν ἀνθρωπεῖαν φύσιν πρὸς τὴν προτέραν εὐγένειαν ἐπανήγαγεν. The author repeatedly emphasises that the outcome is “the salvation of humanity,” which determines a feast for angels. He insists a great deal on this image of the common feast and joy of rational creatures, around the Lord. The same universal feast is described by Gregory of Nyssa at the end of *De anima* as the feast of the eventual apokatastasis. Unity, concord and harmony will

reign in that feast: every diversity that is present now will be over (πάσα αὕτη ἡ ανωμαλία ἐκποδών); there will be no inequality of persons (οὐκ εἶδε προσώπων διαφοράν). This is typical of the notion of apokatastasis as a return to unity in Origen and Nyssen, a unity that is not a confusion of substances, but a harmony.

The author provides as a motivation that this feast is made possible only by the grace of God, rather than human merits; this is why there will be no preference of persons. That apokatastasis does not derive from human merits but is a gift of God's grace is an idea typical of Origen's and Gregory Nyssen's understanding of the final restoration. In their view, retributions will be commensurate with each one's merits, while the eventual bliss in apokatastasis will be a fruit, not of human deserts, but of God's grace, and this is why it will have no limit and no end. Of course, both for Origen and for the author of this homily, human collaboration and voluntary adhesion to the Good is important; it consists in good will, προαιρέσεως μόνης, and a pure mind, διανοίας καθαρᾶς, which is purified by God. Christ has not only defeated death, but also "broken the chains of our sins," τὰς σειρὰς τῶν ἡμετέρων ἁμαρτιῶν διαλύσας, and "has resurrected *all humanity* together with him," τὴν οἰκουμένην ἑαυτῷ συνανέστησε. This idea as well, that Christ's resurrection prefigures and contains the resurrection of all humanity, is one of the most outstanding features of Origen's interpretation of Christ's resurrection.<sup>624</sup> Christ had no personal debt due to sin, but he became indebted himself in order to liberate humanity from enslavement to sin.<sup>625</sup> This discourse is very close to that developed by Gregory of Nyssa in *De an.* 101–104 on humans covered by the debts of sin and finally liberated only at the eventual apokatastasis, which depends on the work of Christ. Again exactly as Origen and Gregory Nyssen, the author of this homily, be it John Chrysostom or not, insists that the awareness of the future salvation should not encourage moral relaxation. He also remarks that the Lord's baptism "has healed the *whole of humanity* [πάσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην]"; his gift is so great that it never vanishes and it extends to the *whole of humanity*, again τὴν οἰκουμένην ἅπασαν.

The characterisation of Easter as a new creation is the focus of Homily 7 in *s. Pascha* ascribed to John Chrysostom. This is also the aim of the initial long excursus on the date of Jesus's passion and resurrection, which also involves sources such as Jewish sages, the Septuagint, Philo, Josephus, and the like, and also the record of the facts concerning Jesus written under

<sup>624</sup> See Ramelli, "Clement's Notion of the Logos."

<sup>625</sup> Οὐκ ὀφείλων, δυνάμενος δὲ καταβαλεῖν, καταθείς ἀπέλυσε τὸν ὑπεύθυνον.

Pilate, according to which Jesus was crucified eight days before the Calends of April. The author observes that this is the same date of creation, which was deemed to have occurred in the spring equinox. The fall took place because of “the devil’s envy,” but the Son wants to restore humanity to the state anterior to the fall (chs. 25–26): this will be ἡ ἐκκαθάρσεως ἀποκατάσσις, “the apokatastasis or restoration of purification.” The restoration brought about by Christ is a new creation in that Christ’s aim is to create the human being anew into its original condition (ἐπὶ τὸν πρῶτον ἀνακτίσαι τρόπον), an expression that is very much redolent of the terminology of apokatastasis. Moreover, the lexicon of διόρθωσις employed by the author also pertains to the terminology of apokatastasis, when he envisages “the correction of the whole human nature,” ἐπὶ διορθώσει ὅλης τῆς φύσεως. Apokatastasis is also characterised by the author of this homily as the recapitulation of all beings, in heaven and on earth, in Christ (ch. 31). The terminology of recapitulation is joined to that of apokatastasis to describe the *telos*. In ch. 35 the author focuses on Christ’s *descensus ad inferos* which brought about the liberation of those who were in hell; this liberation is made possible in that Christ has purified the whole of humanity, so to make “human nature free [ἐλευθέραν τὴν φύσιν ἡμῶν]” from the dirtiness of evil (ch. 40). The author even identifies Christ’s sacrifice with the apokatastasis of humanity (ch. 46), by observing that the prophets foresaw the sacrifice of the Messiah, exactly called “restoration/apokatastasis”: Amos “foresaw the restoration,” τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν βλέπων.

It is telling that these homilies were ascribed to Chrysostom. They are further eloquent testimonies of the diffusion of the doctrine of apokatastasis still at that time and of the importance of Christ’s cross and resurrection in it. As for John himself, it is interesting to notice the emphasis that he placed on Easter as a universal feast, to be celebrated not only in churches, but in the public space of cities.<sup>626</sup>

Proclus of Constantinople († 446) was a friend and a disciple of John Chrysostom.<sup>627</sup> He managed to prevent a posthumous condemnation of Theodore of Mopsuestia by remarking that Theodore—notably, a supporter of apokatastasis—had died in communion with the church. Among twenty

<sup>626</sup> On this public celebration of Easter promoted by him see N. Andrade, “The Processions of John Chrysostom and the Contested Spaces of Constantinople,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18,2 (2010) 161–189.

<sup>627</sup> See N. Constatas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5, Texts and Translations*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 66 (Leiden, 2003), esp. Chs. 1–3 on Proclus.

homilies preserved under his name (PG 65,651 ff.), some are dubious; besides these, others were discovered subsequently, such as three in a Syriac translation, plus letters and fragments. Socrates (*HE* 7,36.40–42.45.48 and *passim*) shows his sympathy for Proclus; and Socrates' Origenian allegiance is well known. In 7,45 Socrates even draws an opposition between Proclus and Theophilus, in that the former received an excommunicated back into the communion of the church, after the death of the excommunicated man, while the latter, Theophilus of Alexandria, excommunicated Origen almost two centuries after his death. That in this comparison the blame is with Theophilus and the praise with Proclus and Origen is clear.

Among his homilies, too, there are some Paschal homilies. In a *Homily on the Resurrection*, Christ's resurrection is said to have achieved the union of heaven and earth and the liberation of the world, not only from death, but also from sin (λύσιν ἀμαρτιῶν). For Christ has defeated, not only death, but also the devil, evil: θάνατος ἐλύθη καὶ διάβολος καταισχύνηται. The *Homily on Easter* celebrates Christ's triumph over death, bringing about both resurrection and beatitude and the reconciliation of heaven and earth. Indeed, Christ took upon himself the malediction of the whole human race. In a *Homily on the Theophany*, 5,42–43, a quotation from St. Paul introduces the notion of Christ's work of liberating human beings from evil and saving "all" of them: "God's *saving grace for all humans* [πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις] has been manifested [...] Jesus Christ, great God and Saviour, who has offered himself for us, in order to liberate us from all iniquities [λυτρώσεται ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀνομίας]." In a *Homily on the Nativity*, 7, the "inhumanation" of Christ is said to call humanity back to Paradise, or better to make it worthy of the Kingdom of Heavens, which implies not only the granting of the resurrection, but also that of salvation: βασιλείας οὐρανῶν ἀξιωθέντα. Christ is described as "the one who removes sin, throws the devil into the abyss, empties hell, and gives life in the world to come to humanity as a gift [...] the Saviour" (ibid. 11). Proclus too, moreover, like the Bible and the Origenians, applies to the fire and suffering in the other world only the characterisation of αἰώνια, "of the world to come," and never that of αἰδία or "eternal" proper.

Peter Chrysologus (406–450), too, seems to have supported the doctrine of apokatastasis. He was the archbishop of Ravenna from 433 CE to his death and wrote a number of short homilies, mostly exegetical, against "Arians" and Miaphysites, against paganism, on the Incarnation, on the Apostolic Symbol, and so on.<sup>628</sup> One of the most significant is certainly his comment

<sup>628</sup> On Origenian presence in the church of Ravenna see K. Comoth, "Ravenna im Kontext des christlichen Alexandrinismus," in *Origeniana VIII*, 1219 ff.



on the parable of the lost (and recovered) sheep, in *Hom.* 168: “the one lost sheep represents the whole human race lost in Adam, and so the Good Shepherd follows the one, seeks the one, in order that in the one He may find all, in the one He may *restore all*.”

### *Theodoret*

Theodoret of Cyr(r)us († 466) was the successor of Theodore of Mopsuestia at the head of the Antioch school.<sup>629</sup> Besides knowing Diodore’s and Theodore’s works, he also knew those of Origen and Bardaisan.<sup>630</sup> All of these were supporters of the apokatastasis doctrine. His position vis-à-vis the doctrine of apokatastasis is not entirely clear, but several elements are worth taking into consideration. His concept of the punishments decreed by God as therapeutic is a good premise of the theory of the eventual restoration: “He discloses here the *reason for punishment*; for the Lord, who loves humanity, *torments us only to cure us*” (*Hom in Ezech.* 6:6). This is also why Theodoret envisages an end of God’s “wrath,” and thus also of the punishment decided by him: “After his anger, God will bring to an end his Judgment; for he will neither be angry unto the end, nor keep his wrath to eternity” (*In Is.* 13). Theodoret’s notion of the resurrection, like that of Origen and of Gregory Nyssen, is not simply physical, but also spiritual. Not only will bodies rise in immortality and incorruptibility, but souls, too, will be freed from sin, and sin will no more exist (*Comp.* 5,21). He also relies on 1 Cor 15:28—the favourite passage of Origen and Gregory Nyssen in support of apokatastasis—to describe the *telos*: God will be “all in all” when not only death will not exist any more, but also sin will have disappeared. This was Origen’s very argument: since God must be “all in all,” we cannot admit of evil in the *telos*, lest God may be found in evil.

<sup>629</sup> On his Antiochene network see the social and doctrinal analysis of A.M. Schor, *Theodoret’s People: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria* (Berkeley, 2011), esp. Ch. 2.

<sup>630</sup> *Haer. fab. comp.* 1,22 PG 83,372: Bardaisan “composed many other works in Syriac, which were subsequently translated into Greek. I too have come across some treatises of his, such as his work *Against Fate*, that *Against the Marcionite Heresy*, and many others.” See my *Bardaisan*, 250–253. On Theodoret and Origen see in part N. Siniosoglou, *Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance* (Cambridge, 2008); my rev. in *Journal of Religion* 89 (2009) 413–415. On his *Curatio* see at least, among recent works, *Continuity and Discontinuity in Early Christian Apologetics*, eds. J. Ulrich–A.C. Jacobsen–M. Kahlos (Frankfurt, 2009), Ch. 7 by J. Ulrich, who points out the heavy use of Eusebius’s *Praeparatio Evangelica* in the *Curatio* and shows that the *Curatio* is “one of the first examples of arranging theology in well-ordered theological topics” (127).

Especially in *Comm. in I Cor.* 15,28 (PG 82,360C–361A), Theodoret's depiction of the *telos* suggests the apokatastasis theory: God will be "all in all," not only from the ontological point of view, as is now, but also from the axiological point of view, in the sense of "good will, benevolence" (κατ' εὐδοκίαν), since now God rejoices only in the good, but in the end God will rejoice in all, because all will be good, clearly after rejecting evil and being purified from evil. This is the same as Origen said: in the end God will be "all in all," not as now, when God is only in few, the good, but in all ("and *not only in few or in many, but in all* God will be all, when at last there will be no more death, nor death's sting, *nor evil*, most definitely: then God will truly be *all in all*," *Princ.* 3,6,3). A union of wills in the Good is envisaged by Theodoret, just as the unity in the *telos* envisaged by Origen, a unity of will within all rational creatures and between all rational creatures and God, the Good. Corruption, πάθη, and sins will have utterly disappeared, for God to be really "all in all":

"Ἰνα ἢ ὁ Θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι.] Νῦν μὲν γὰρ πανταχοῦ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ἐστίν· ἀπερίγραπτον γὰρ ἔχει τὴν φύσιν, καὶ Ἐν αὐτῷ ζῶμεν, καὶ κινούμεθα, καὶ ἐσμέν κατὰ τὸν θεῖον Ἀπόστολον· κατὰ μέντοι τὴν εὐδοκίαν, οὐκ ἐν ἅπασιν ἐστίν. Εὐδοκεῖ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτὸν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐλπίζουσιν ἐπὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ. Καὶ ἐν τούτοις δὲ οὐ πάντα ἐστίν. Οὐδεὶς γὰρ καθαρὸς ἀπὸ ῥύπου [...] Οὐκοῦν εὐδοκεῖ μὲν ἐν οἷς κατορθοῦσιν, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ δὲ ἐν οἷς πταίουσιν· ἐν δὲ τῷ μέλλοντι βίῳ, τῆς φθορᾶς παυομένης, καὶ τῆς ἀθανασίας χορηγουμένης, χάραν οὐκ ἔχει τὰ πάθη· τούτων δὲ παντελῶς ἐξεληλαμένων, οὐδὲν εἶδος ἁμαρτίας ἐνεργεῖται λοιπόν. Οὕτως ἔσται λοιπὸν ὁ Θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι, πάντων τοῦ πταίνειν ἀπηλλαγμένων, καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν τετραμμένων, καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τὰ χεῖρω οὐ δεχομένων ῥοπήν.

"That God may be all in all." Now God is everywhere from the ontological point of view, since God's substance is impossible to circumscribe, and "in Him we live, move, and exist," according to the divine apostle. But *from the point of view of good will and delight*, now God is not in all. For God *delights in those who fear him*, and in those who hope for his mercy. And even in these, God is not all now. For nobody is pure from contamination [...] thus, God rejoices in their good deeds, but not in their evil deeds. But in the future life, when *corruption will cease*, and immortality will be provided, *passions will have no room*. And when these have been *utterly chased away*, *no kind of sin will be committed any longer*. In this way God will finally be "all in all," for all will have been *liberated from sin*, and will have *turned toward God*, and will *no more admit of any fall into evil*.

This is in full agreement with Origen's view of the eventual apokatastasis. God will be "all in all" when evil/sin is in nobody any longer, as a result of a total regeneration, a resurrection-restoration of humanity. For God cannot be found in evil. And, as Origen maintained, Theodoret too states that there will be no further fall from the eventual apokatastasis. The very same

argument is proposed more concisely in *Comm. in Eph.* 1,23 (PG 82,517,34–49), which makes Theodoret’s adhesion to apokatastasis likely:

Τοῦτο δὲ ἀκριβέστερον κατὰ τὸν μέλλοντα βίον γενήσεται. Οὕτω γὰρ καὶ Κορινθίοις ἐπιστέλλων ἐδίδασκεν. Εἰπὼν γάρ· Ἐσχάτος ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος· καὶ ὅτι Πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ, τελευταῖον τέθεικεν· Ἴνα ἢ ὁ Θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πάσι. Καὶ ἐκεῖνα μὲν διὰ πλειόνων ἡρμηνεύσαμεν, ἐροῦμεν δὲ καὶ ἐνταῦθα συντόμως, ὅτι κατὰ τὸν παρόντα βίον ἐν πάσι μὲν ἔστιν ὁ Θεός· ἀπερίγραπτον γὰρ ἔχει τὴν φύσιν· οὐ πάντα δὲ ἐν πάσι, ἐπειδὴ οἱ μὲν δυσσεβοῦσιν, οἱ δὲ παρανομοῦσι· οἰκεῖ δὲ ἐν τοῖς φοβουμένοις αὐτὸν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐλπίζουσιν ἐπὶ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ. Ἐν δέ γε τῷ μέλλοντι βίῳ, τῆς θνητότητος παυομένης, καὶ τῆς ἀθανασίας χορηγομένης, καὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἔτι χώραν ἔχουσης, πάντα ἐν πάσιν ἔσται.

This will happen more precisely in the future life. For Paul taught as follows also in his letter to the Corinthians. Indeed, after saying, “the last enemy will be destroyed: death,” and “he has subjected everything to his feet,” he has finally stated: “That God may be *all in all*.” I have already interpreted this passage more extensively, yet I shall say something briefly here too. In the present life, to be sure, God is in all, insofar as his substance is impossible to circumscribe, but God is not “all in all,” because some are impious, and some are transgressors, whereas God dwells in those who fear him, and in those who hope for his mercy. But in the future life, when mortality will pass away, and immortality will be provided, and *sin will have no more room, God will be “all in all.”*

### *Isidore of Pelusius*

Isidore of Pelusius († 436) was a disciple of John Chrysostom (according to Nicephorus *HE* 14,53), and endeavoured—albeit in vain—to defend him before Theophilus of Alexandria for the protection that Chrysostom had granted to the Origenist monks. Isidore was himself a monk of the Egyptian desert and belonged to the same family as Theophilus. It seems that he wrote about ten thousand letters, two thousand of which survive. Having been unsuccessful with Theophilus with respect to Chrysostom, at least he convinced Theophilus’s successor, Cyril of Alexandria, to render justice to Chrysostom’s memory.

In his Scriptural exegesis, he privileged the moral and spiritual sense of the Bible, and was a supporter of the Nicene creed (*Ep.* 4,99).<sup>631</sup> The Byzantine theologian Gobar (VI century, *ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 232, p. 291b

<sup>631</sup> See C.M. Fouskas, *St. Isidore of Pelusium, his Life and his Works* (Athens, 1970); P. Éviéux, *Isidore de Péluse* (Paris, 1995).

Bekker) attests that Isidore was accused of Origenism: "Severus [sc. of Antioch] wanted to blame St. Isidore, but did not have any ground for this; thus, he accused him of Origenism [φήμην αὐτῷ περιπλάττει Ὀριγενιασμοῦ]." Of course, it is difficult to establish whether this label of "Origenism" also included a reference to the doctrine of apokatastasis in this specific case. Gobar also attests (ibid.) that Isidore blamed Theophilus and Cyril for their hostility towards John Chrysostom and praised and admired the latter (τοὺς μὲν ἕνεκα τῆς πρὸς τὸν Χρυσόστομον ἀπεχθείας ἐκάκιζε, τὸν δὲ ἐπῆνει τε καὶ ἐθαύμαζε).

### *Titus of Basra*

Titus of Basra, or Bostra, was active under the reigns of Julian and Valens (361–378). He was a follower of Diodore of Tarsus, knew and used his works, and very probably he too had a penchant for the doctrine of apokatastasis. His masterpiece is his *Against the Manichaeans*, in four books. Book 4 and a part of Book 3 are extant only in a Syriac translation.<sup>632</sup> This work is cited by Jerome, *VI* 102, as *libri fortes adversum Manichaeos* along with some other works by Titus, of which only a few exegetical passages are extant.<sup>633</sup> It is notable that even Augustine—who subsequently rejected it—embraced the doctrine of apokatastasis precisely in his works against the Manichaeans, as I shall soon point out.<sup>634</sup> Again Jerome, in *Ep.* 70 (84), lists Titus among those authors whose secular learning is as high as their knowledge of Scripture. Socrates (*HE* 3,25) mentions him among the Acacians, and Sozomen (*HE* 3,14) cites him together with Cyril of Jerusalem and few others among the most important writers. Titus left the door open for the eventual restoration in that he considered the otherworldly punishment to be corrective and purifying, and therefore not eternal: those of hell "are places of torment and education aimed at the *correction* of those who have sinned" (*Adv. Man.* 1,32).

<sup>632</sup> The most ancient dated Syriac ms. is British Library Add. 12150 (Edessa, 411CE); the most ancient Greek ms. only stems from the XI cent. The Syriac translation includes the whole text. Cf. P.-H. Poirier, "Une première étude du *Contra Manichaeos* de Titus de Bostra," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 61 (2005) 355–362; N.A. Pedersen, "Titus of Bostra in Syriac Literature," *ibid.* 62 (2006) 359–367.

<sup>633</sup> Cf. J. Sickenberger, *Titus von Bostra. Studien zu dessen Lukashomilien* (Leipzig, 1901).

<sup>634</sup> See below the section on Augustine.

The sixth-century Byzantine theologian Gobar (*ap. Phot. Bibl. cod. 232, 291b*) attests that in many passages, or in many respects, Titus of Bostra followed, and even endorsed, Origen and his disciple Theognostus: “Both the great Athanasius of Alexandria and Titus of Bostra in many points approved [ἐν πολλοῖς ἀπεδέχετο λόγοις] of Origen and Theognostus.” As far as Athanasius is concerned, Gobar certainly had in mind, for example, the passage of *De decretis* that I have discussed earlier in the section devoted to Athanasius, where the Alexandrian praised Origen, defended him, and appealed to his theology in support of his own, pro-Nicene discourse. Such appreciative words on Origen and Theognostus were written by Titus of Basra as well, according to the testimony of Gobar. This makes it more probable that Titus himself was a supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis.

Indeed, in a passage of his polemical work against the Manichaeans, which focuses on theodicy, Titus claimed that punishments in the next world will not be eternal.<sup>635</sup> This is perfectly in line with Diodore of Tarsus’s eschatological thought (notably, Diodore too had written a substantial *Contra Manichaeos*), and of course with Origen’s. Moreover, this is in line with Titus’s anti-Manichaean interpretation of Genesis 3: the fall of the protoplasts testifies to God’s Providence, and not to God’s ignorance of what would happen. The fall allowed the human being to exert its free will; the death that came about as a result of this is beneficial, in that it offers rest to the just and prevents sinners from sinning further. This is the same idea as is found in Methodius and Gregory of Nyssa: physical death, decreed by God after the fall, far from being a punishment, is a benefit to humans, since it impedes an eternity of sin and thus an eternity of condemnation, and, by destroying the human being, it allows it to be rebuilt anew, free from sin. This argument can work only in case one excludes an eternal death or damnation, which further confirms that Titus too excluded it.

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<sup>635</sup> See N.A. Pedersen, *Demonstrative Proof in Defence of God. A Study of Titus of Bostra’s Contra Manichaeos* (Leiden, 2004). In Ch. 9 a comparison is drawn with Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia; in Chs. 7 and 8 an analysis is provided of Titus’s philosophical thought and of his exegesis of Genesis 3. Ibid. 145 Pedersen discusses the possibility that Titus studied in Caesarea and there grew a sympathy for Origen. This would also explain Titus’s penchant for the doctrine of apokatastasis. However, to this end it is unnecessary to suppose that Titus must have studied in Caesarea, given that Origen’s ideas were by then widespread outside that city as well. On Titus see also J.-M. Lavoie–P.-H. Poirier–Th.S. Schmidt, *Les Homélie sur l’Évangile de Luc de Titus de Bostra*, in *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity*, eds. L. DiTommaso–L. Turcescu (Leiden, 2008), ch. 12.

*The Controversy on  
Origen at the End of the Fourth Century:  
A Telling Silence on Apokatastasis*

Epiphanius of Salamis, Theophilus of Alexandria, and Jerome (at least after his volte-face) were the main opponents of Origen—or better, of his thought or what was represented as his thought—in the crisis toward the end of the fourth century. But their critiques prove contingent and inconsistent; Theophilus was an admirer of Origen and a friend of his followers; then he persecuted some Origenian monks, and later on returned to reading and appreciating Origen without problems. Jerome's U-turn was even more radical, from an extraordinary admiration to a complete rejection of Origen. Besides investigating in the following sections the reasons for such behaviours—which in part have been explained by Clark in terms of social networks,<sup>636</sup> but which call for further clarification—I shall point out something that seems to me remarkable: among the first explicit accusations levelled against Origen by these authors, even though some do deal with eschatological issues,<sup>637</sup> none is directed against his apokatastasis doctrine, or at least none is against the eventual universal restoration of all humans. They were well aware that Origen's core doctrine was that of the eventual restoration of all human beings, but they did not criticise this (they limited themselves to counter the claim of the final salvation of the devil), very probably because, as Basil attests—I have shown this—, still at the end of the fourth century a great many Christians believed in the final apokatastasis of all humans.

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<sup>636</sup> E.A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy* (Princeton, 1992) admits both of theological motivations—especially related to Trinitarian matters—and of social reasons. Prinzivalli, "Per un'indagine," 433–460; Eadem, "Aspetti esegetico-dottrinali del dibattito nel IV sec. sulle tesi origeniane in materia escatologica," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 12 (1995), 279–325; Eadem, *Magister*, 65 ff., 74–75 207; Eadem, "The Controversy about Origen before Epiphanius," in *Origeniana VII*, 195–213; Guillaumont, *Kephalaia*, 87; M. Simonetti, "La controversia origeniana," *Augustinianum* 26 (1986) 7–31; Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism*, 108 ff. W.A. Bienert, "Zur Entstehung des Antiorigenismus in 3./4. Jahrhunderts," in *Origeniana VIII*, 829–842.

<sup>637</sup> This is an aspect that has been often neglected by scholars. It is true, however, that at this stage most of the accusations bear on Christological and Trinitarian issues, as is highlighted for instance by Junod, *Controverses*, 215–223, who, however, bases himself more on Pamphilus and Rufinus than on the sources I am analysing now. Rufinus himself, at any rate, does tackle the question of apokatastasis, as I shall show, and does so in order to argue that Origen supported this doctrine in defence of theodicy.

*Epiphanius the Heresiologist*

Let me thus turn to the single opponents of Origen in detail, beginning with Epiphanius of Salamis, whose anti-Origenian opposition dates to the years 370–390<sup>638</sup> and is related, to some extent, to his own being suspicious of philosophy and Greek encyclopaedic learning as a potential trigger for heresies, in accord with a widespread heresiological assumption.<sup>639</sup> Thus, for instance, he accused Origen of having a “mind blinded” by his Greek *paideia* (*Pan.* 64,72,9), and of having been bit by the venomous snake of κοσμική προπαίδεία (ibid. 64,72,5).

In an early phase of his anti-Origenism, in 374 CE, he accused Origen of having facilitated the outset of “Arianism” (*Anc.* 52); this accusation returns in a letter of his to the bishop of Jerusalem, reported by Jerome, in which he warned him as follows: *Arii patrem [sc. Origenem] et aliarum haereseon radicem et parentem laudare non debetis* (Hier. *Ep.* 51,3,3).<sup>640</sup> This accusation—often styled as “subordinationism”—is entirely ungrounded, as I have extensively argued elsewhere,<sup>641</sup> but nevertheless it dies hard, even in modern scholarship. At this early stage of Epiphanius’s criticism of Origen, there is no trace of charges related to the doctrine of the eventual apokatastasis of all human beings.

Epiphanius’s criticism also focuses on Origen’s allegorical exegesis of Scripture, especially of Genesis, and on his purported denial of the resurrection of the body. In *Pan.* 6,63–64, datable to 376 CE,<sup>642</sup> Epiphanius repeats

<sup>638</sup> Clark, *Controversy*, 86–103 on the accusations of Epiphanius against Origenism.

<sup>639</sup> On Epiphanius’s comprehensive heresiological work see recently J.M. Schott, “Heresiology as Universal History in Epiphanius’s *Panarion*,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 10 (2006) 546–563; R. Flower, “Genealogies of Unbelief: Epiphanius of Salamis and Heresiological Authority,” in *Unclassical Traditions, II: Perspectives from East and West in Late Antiquity*, eds. C. Kelly–R. Flower–M. Stuart Williams (Cambridge, 2011), 70–87, who argues that the *Panarion* is modelled on classical epistemological and scientific “orthodoxy.” One term of comparison is Pliny’s *Naturalis historia*. On Epiphanius’s biography of Origen see J.R. Lyman, “The Making of a Heretic: The Life of Origen in Epiphanius *Panarion* 64,” *Studia Patristica* 31 (1997) 445–451.

<sup>640</sup> On the Trinitarian theology of Epiphanius’s *Ancoratus* see O. Kösters, *Die Trinitätslehre des Epiphanius von Salamis: ein Kommentar zum “Ancoratus”* (Göttingen, 2003). For the edition of the letter preserved by Jerome see S. Eusebii Hieronymi *Epistulae Pars I: Epistulae I–LXX*, ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54 (Vienna, 1996), 400.

<sup>641</sup> See Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism.” C. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven, 2012), has a chapter on Origen. I am grateful to the author for sharing chapters of it with me for comments prior to publication.

<sup>642</sup> A reading of this work as a heresiological biography has recently been proposed by Y.R. Kim, “Reading the *Panarion* as Collective Biography: The Heresiarch as Unholy Man,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (2010) 382–413.

the accusation of subordinationism and of having anticipated "Arianism," besides that of having denied the resurrection of the body. He also blames the protological doctrine of the so-called double creation. But one major weakness in Epiphanius's argument is that he bases his own critique of Origen's resurrection doctrine on Methodius (*De res.* 12–62). For the latter had entirely misunderstood Origen's notion of the risen "spiritual body" that keeps the εἶδος of the earthly body. As a consequence, Epiphanius, like Methodius, misunderstood Origen's argument concerning the passing away of the transient and ever-transforming ὑποκείμενον and the permanence of the εἶδος of the body. The latter was meant by Origen to designate the metaphysical form of the body, the metaphysical principle of its identity, whereas Methodius and Epiphanius seem to have misunderstood the body's εἶδος in the sense of an external shape, σχῆμα or μορφή (*ibid.*).<sup>643</sup> This understanding entirely alters Origen's conception of the risen body. Epiphanius's criticism of Origen's resurrection doctrine, based on Methodius's account (and misunderstanding), rather than on a direct reading of Origen's texts, provides a good example of a widespread phenomenon: Origen's adversaries criticised Origen without reading his works, which were too many, too long, and too difficult, and often limited themselves to adducing the same quotations that their predecessors had already adduced, and even copying the same anti-Origenian charges from one another.

Moreover, Epiphanius's misunderstanding of Origen's εἶδος terminology, inherited via Methodius, seems to offer an example of Epiphanius's general lack of carefulness in respect to Origen's philosophical and technical terminology. His lexicon of eternity offers another interesting example, which is particularly relevant to the apokatastasis theme. For Epiphanius's own terminology of eternity is not very rigorous. Unlike Origen and many of his followers, and even unlike Scripture itself, Epiphanius does not seem to differentiate sharply between the terms αἰώνιος and ἄϊδιος, and in general he does not seem to be deeply interested in the terminology, and the very problematic, of eternity, which is a philosophical issue (and Epiphanius was wary of philosophy).<sup>644</sup> Indeed, he never speaks of ἄϊδιος life, and uses the expression "αἰώνιος life" very seldom, only in quotations from Scripture and liturgy. He uses ἄϊδιος only in connection with God and the Son, often in expressions that have an exact correspondent with αἰώνιος, for instance "αἰώνιος

<sup>643</sup> See C. Riggi, "La forma del corpo risorto secondo Metodio in Epifanio (*Haer.* 64)," in *Morte e immortalità nella catechesi dei Padri nel III–IV secolo*, ed. S. Felici (Rome, 1985), 75–92.

<sup>644</sup> See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new edition, 231–235.



kingdom” or “ἄϊδιος kingdom” of God or Christ. His uses of αἰώνιος, too, are much fewer: he employs it either when citing Scripture or else heretics, especially Gnostics.

Epiphanius employs ἄϊδιος in reference to the Trinity, or for the eternity of the relationship between Son and the Father, or simply for the eternity of the Logos, against the “Arian” slogan that “There was a time when it did not exist.” This formula was not Christian, but was imported into Christianity by Origen, who in turn, as I have argued elsewhere, had inherited it, not from earlier Christian authors, but from the early imperial philosophical debate on the eternity of the world.<sup>645</sup> Epiphanius ascribes absolute eternity to Christ as the eternal Sabbath, and understands ἄϊδιος as a synonym for that which is never destroyed and has had no beginning, but remains eternally across the aeons. He also argues against the existence of two simultaneous and co-eternal principles. He uses ἄϊδιος, moreover, when he mentions Gnostic divinities (for instance, the Pre-Father, who is “invisible, eternal, and ungenerated,” or the Ogdoad indicating the fulness of the aeons). Epiphanius uses αἰώνιος as well in reference to God, or divine attributes or powers, or Christ. In *Pan.* 1,158,7 he mentions the birth of the Son “before times αἰώνιον,” which clearly does not mean “eternal times,” but “times immemorial,” and cites the creation of the aeons by the Son himself. He uses other OT expressions with αἰώνιος as well. In the Gnostics, Epiphanius often found, and cited, αἰώνιος in the Platonic sense of “eternal,” or “belonging to the Aeons.” In *Pan.* 2,29,5 it even refers to the attempt at imitating eternity by means of a long succession of temporal periods. Epiphanius also ascribes αἰώνιος to the life, to the home or abode, and to the fire in the world to come. The fire is described in this way in *Pan.* 1,432,9, where Epiphanius is expounding his eschatological theory: “he will judge all justly, and he will send wicked spirits, both the angels who have transgressed and committed apostasy, and, among humans, the impious, the unjust, the lawless, and the blasphemous, into the αἰώνιον fire, whereas to the just and holy, who have observed his commandments and remained in love for him, some from the very beginning, others after conversion, he will give through his grace life and immortality and αἰώνιον glory.” Epiphanius draws no distinction between evil angels and damned human beings, while in the Bible ἄϊδιοι chains are applied only to the former, whereas for humans punishments are constantly described as αἰώνιοι. Parallel to the fire are “αἰώνιος punishment” and “αἰώνιος torment,” the latter described in *Anc.* 97,8 as a “second death,

<sup>645</sup> See my “‘Maximus’ on Evil.” Further elements in “Alexander of Aphrodisias: A Source of Origen’s Philosophy?” *Philosophie Antique* 13 (2013) 1–49.

that which follows damnation." Thus, Epiphanius himself, apart from quotations of Scripture or of heretics, uses only rarely either αἰώνιος or αἰδιός, and seems to tend not to distinguish clearly between them.

So far, in Epiphanius's anti-Origenian accusations there is no criticism of the apokatastasis doctrine. Let me now consider a later document: Epiphanius's aforementioned letter to John of Jerusalem, from 394 CE. Here, the following charges are listed against Origen: again his purported subordinationism, the so-called preexistence of souls—a very imprecise expression, since Origen supported the preexistence of *logika* endowed with a spiritual body<sup>646</sup>—, the notion of the incarnation of each soul as an expiation of an earlier sin—another instance of imprecision, since for Origen it is not an incarnation but a change in the same body—, the identification of the skin tunics with the body tout court—whereas Origen identified them with mortality and heavy corporeality—, the idea of the soul or ψυχή as the result of a ψῦξις of the intellect, the allegorical exegesis of Paradise, and the purported negation of the resurrection of the body.

Three further accusations are introduced as new: that Origen criticised human reproduction and that he taught that Adam lost the image of God with sin, and that the devil will inherit the eventual blessedness together with the righteous. Thus, the theme of apokatastasis indeed emerges here, but, as is patent, the only kind of apokatastasis that Epiphanius criticises is that of the *devil*, not that of human beings. As for the two other accusations, that Origen's anthropology implied a criticism of human reproduction might be true, rather than of Origen himself, of some followers of his such as Hieracas, who adduced NT passages such as 1 Cor 7:34 and Matt 19:12, and 25:1–2, as Epiphanius himself reports in *Pan.* 67,6. In fact, this motif of human reproduction came into prominence during Epiphanius's own lifetime, especially with Jerome's controversy with Jovinian.<sup>647</sup> As for the accusation of teaching that Adam lost the image of God, this is exactly the opposite of what Origen maintained regarding the "theology of the image." This, according to Origen, can be blurred by sin, and covered with much dirtiness, but can never be cancelled or wiped away from any human, and will shine forth again in the end, in apokatastasis.<sup>648</sup>

<sup>646</sup> See Ramelli, *Preexistence of Souls?*

<sup>647</sup> See below in this same chapter, the section on Jerome.

<sup>648</sup> As for the theology of the image Epiphanius inspired a middle line between anthropomorphites and Origenians in Egyptian monasticism: D. Bumazhnov, "Einige Aspekte der Nachwirkung des *Ancoratus* und des *Panarion* des hl. Epiphanius," *Adamantius* 11 (2005) 158–178.

The very idea of the apokatastasis of human sinners and of the devil was spread by Jerome in his Commentary on Ephesians (4,3–4,16), which in fact was virtually a translation of Origen's commentary. With this, he had transmitted the notion of the eventual apokatastasis of sinners and of the devil. But in the Nineties of the fourth century he rejected these ideas. Epiphanius echoes Jerome; indeed, against the apokatastasis of the devil he takes over Jerome's argument based on the differentiation of merits. Jerome used this argument against Jovinian, and only much later against Origen. Epiphanius applied this argument to the sole devil. Evagrian Origenism in the desert probably also contributed to the diffusion of the idea of the devil's salvation. Indeed, Epiphanius concludes his letter by expressing alarm for the diffusion of "Origenism" in Palestine promoted by the Evagrian Palladius.

What emerges from the analysis of Epiphanius's accusations against Origen is that he was criticising Origenism rather than Origen's own thought. This was already clear to the sixth-century Byzantine theologian Gobar, according to whom Epiphanius in his accusations, like Theophilus, "completely altered Origen's ideas" (λίαν ἐκτρέπονται τὸν Ὠριγένην, *ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod. 232, p. 291b*). In this way, Epiphanius and Theophilus did not in fact criticise Origen's own doctrines. It must be taken into account that Epiphanius admired Origen in some respects, for instance for his *Hexapla*.<sup>649</sup> Like Evagrius, moreover, he was also hostile to sacred images.<sup>650</sup> Moreover, it is significant that he was proud to claim that he directly knew Origen's works—even six thousands of them, according to Rufinus (*Adult. 14–15*,<sup>651</sup> cf. Epiph. *AH 64,63,8*)! But his poor knowledge of Origen's authentic thought, and his misunderstanding of Origen's terminologies of metaphysical forms and of

<sup>649</sup> Cf. Grafton–Williams, *Christianity*, 92–95.

<sup>650</sup> Clark, *Controversy*, 100–104. However, the authenticity of the *Tractatus contra eos qui imagines faciunt* is far from being undisputed: see I. Bugár, "Origenist Christology and Iconoclasm: The Case of Epiphanius of Salamis," in *Christus bei den Vätern: Forscher aus dem Osten und Westen Europas an den Quellen des gemeinsamen Glaubens: Pro Oriente-Studentagung über "Christus bei den Griechischen und Lateinischen Kirchenvätern im ersten Jahrtausend" in Wien* (Wien, 2004) 96–110.

<sup>651</sup> Rufinus in *De adult. 15* blames him for condemning Origen and yet having spent his whole life studying his works: *quidam ex ipsis, qui se uelut euangelizandi necessitatem per omnes gentes et per omnes linguas habere putat de Origene male loquendi, sex milia librorum eius se legisse quam plurima fratrum multitudine audiente confessus est. Qui si utique, ut ipse dicere solet, pro cognoscendis malis eius legebat, sufficere poterant decem libri ad cognoscendum aut uiginti certe aut quam plurimum triginta; sex milia autem libros legere non iam uelle cognoscere est sed totam paene uitam suam disciplinis eius ac studiis dedere. Quomodo ergo merito iste audiendus est cum eos culpat qui instructionis suae causa perpauca eius [...] legerunt?*

eternity raise serious doubts in this respect. Even if he may have read Origen, he proves unable to distinguish his thought from later deformations (unless one supposes that he was able, but he did not want to do so for the sake of polemic, or else that he read heavily interpolated copies of Origen's works).

What is meaningful is that, if we believe Rufinus, for Epiphanius having read so many works of Origen was a title of pride, and not of shame. It is also remarkable that his portrait of Origen in *Pan.* 64 contains many positive, and indeed very positive, aspects as well. I have already mentioned his admiration for Origen's *Hexapla*. In *Pan.* 64,1,4–5 Epiphanius even recounts an anecdote concerning how Origen was persecuted by the pagans in his youth but heroically resisted; Epiphanius also mentions that he converted a heretic, Ambrose, to orthodoxy, adding the following comment: "For in that day Origen belonged to the orthodox and catholic faith" (*Pan.* 64,2,6–7). To square all this, and more, with the cliché of Origen the heresiarch, Epiphanius had recourse to the stratagem of declaring that Origen was an extremely gifted and orthodox Christian who at a certain point converted to heresy under the pernicious influence of Greek *paideia* and philosophy. It is to be noticed that this *escamotage* was used by Epiphanius in another analogous case, as I have demonstrated elsewhere:<sup>652</sup> that of Bardaisan. This was for him the only way to make sense of the contrasting traditions he had: that of a very learned defender of Christian orthodoxy against "Gnosticism" and Marcionism, and that of a heretic. Therefore, Epiphanius used again this strategy and in *Pan.* 56 presented Bardaisan as, first, a blessed defender of the Church, full of wisdom and learning, and then, all of a sudden, a damned heresiarch, and especially a "Gnostic," a Valentinian. For him, too, the accusation of being corrupted by Greek *paideia* and philosophy was handy.

These considerations seem to somehow limit the import of Epiphanius's anti-Origenian accusations, which must be read against the background of his anthropological conception, different from Origen's,<sup>653</sup> of his "political" allegiances—among which that with the opponents of Chrysostom<sup>654</sup>—,

<sup>652</sup> See my *Bardaisan of Edessa*, 239–245.

<sup>653</sup> Epiphanius's anthropology tends to consider the human being as body and soul together, while the Alexandrian anthropology tended to privilege the soul (although I should warn that Origen is far from thinking that a human being can actually exist without a body; only God can). The opposition between the "Asian" (Epiphanius's) and the "Alexandrian" (Origen's) anthropology is emphasised by Prinzivalli, "The Controversy about Origen," 197–200.

<sup>654</sup> On which see W. Mayer, "John Chrysostom as Bishop: The View from Antioch," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55 (2004) 455–466.

and of his concern for the Origenistic doctrines that in his day were spreading in the Egyptian and Palestinian deserts. Most of these were not Origen's doctrines, but the distinction was fatally left aside.

*Theophilus of Alexandria*

The attitude of Theophilus of Alexandria<sup>655</sup> toward Origen's thought and his behaviour in the Origenistic controversy at the end of the fourth century is rather inconsistent, and his anti-Origenian activity episodic. Indeed, his anti-Origenian period was ambiguous and limited to a stretch of very few years, a good while after his election to the bishopric of Alexandria in 385. First, during the outburst of the Origenistic controversy in Palestine, he sided with the Origenists and against Epiphanius, as is attested by Palladius (*Dial.* 16), Socrates (*HE* 6,10), and Sozomen (*HE* 8,14). In his letter to the pope, Theophilus even expressed his despise of Epiphanius's theological arguments. It is significant that, when the controversy was ignited in 396 CE, Theophilus sent Isidore to calm down the disagreement. Isidore wrote to John, the bishop of Jerusalem, another Origenian, advising him to resist Jerome, as we learn from Jerome himself (*C. Ioh.* 37).<sup>656</sup> Theophilus exhorted John and Jerome to be reconciled with one another, albeit he also invited John to adhere to orthodoxy, thus implying that John had been in some way unorthodox so far. This is why the bishop of Jerusalem in 396 CE produced an apologetic response that was reconstructed by Nautin on the basis of Jerome's work *Against John*. In this auto-apology John, the Origenian bishop, defended his own orthodoxy.<sup>657</sup> So far, Theophilus cannot certainly be regarded as an anti-Origenian. Indeed, in 397 CE Jerome wrote to him that

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<sup>655</sup> On his anti-Christian accusations see in brief Clark, *Controversy*, 105 ff.; more broadly on his ecclesiastical politics F. Fatti, "Trame mediterranee: Teofilo, Roma, Costantinopoli," *Adamantius* 12 (2006) 105–138.

<sup>656</sup> See Clark, *Controversy*, 37. N. Russell, *Theophilus of Alexandria* (London/New York, 2007), with a historical outline (3–41), in which he denies Theophilus's responsibility in the destruction of the Serapeum in Alexandria. He does not deny, however, Theophilus's responsibility in the deposition of John Chrysostom. He also offers (45–174) some translations of homilies and letters, among which some concerning the Origenistic controversy; four of these are preserved in Latin by Jerome (*Ep.* 92, 96, 98, 100).

<sup>657</sup> P. Nautin, "La lettre de Théophile d'Alexandrie à l'Église de Jérusalem et la réponse de Jean de Jérusalem," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 69 (1974) 365–394; Idem, "Études de chronologie hiéronymienne (393–397)," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 19 (1973) 69–86 and 213–239, who examines the Origenistic controversy in the years 393–396, endeavouring to explain how Jerome came to the composition of his treatise against John of Jerusalem.

"many people" considered him to be excessively indulgent with the Egyptian Origenists (*Ep.* 63,3). Theophilus wrote to Jerome as a pacifier (*Hier. Ep.* 82,1), but Jerome reproached him for the concord obtaining between him and the Origenian monks of the Egyptian desert (*Hier. Ep.* 82,3). Theophilus indeed invited them to serve in ecclesiastical ministries, as is attested by Socrates (*HE* 6,7) and Sozomen (*HE* 8,12). This concord was not appreciated by Jerome, who can be deemed one of the concurring factors in Theophilus's short, ambiguous anti-Origenian activity.

This activity of Theophilus began thanks to the intervention of another factor: the arrival of the anti-Origenian monks from Scetis at Theophilus's seat in Alexandria. Their aim was to vigorously protest, not even without threats, against Theophilus's festal letter on the incorporeal nature of God (issued in 399 CE).<sup>658</sup> Probably out of fear due to those threats, for a very political reason, Theophilus suddenly admitted the anthropomorphism of God, with the so-called "anthropomorphites" and against the Origenians. This is Photius's account from George of Alexandria:

At that time the controversy against the "anthropomorphites" happened to burst out. The Egyptian monks, for the most part unlearned and rough, were in agitation. Theophilus was scared [δεδοικώς], as it seems, because they attacked him, and had recourse to a sophism, so he said to them: "I saw your faces as the face of God!" But they insisted, adding a further request: that Origen be anathematised [ἀναθεματισθῆναι], because he claimed that the divine has no form [ὡς ἀσχημάτιστον τὸ θεῖον λέγοντα]. Theophilus promised that he would do so, and thus escaped death [διέφυγε τὸν θάνατον].

(*Bibl. Cod.* 96, 82a)

In 400 CE, in a letter to Jerome preserved in Jerome's epistolary correspondence (*Hier. Ep.* 87; cf. 90), Theophilus announced that he had chased away the *furiosi* Origenists from the Nitria monasteries. Moreover, he exhorted Jerome to write against Origenism. He also wrote to Epiphanius, urging him to summon a synod in Cyprus in order to condemn Origen, and then to notify such a condemnation to Constantinople and in Asia Minor. Finally, Jerome wrote to pope Anastasius as well, with the same concerns. According to Palladius's account in *Dial.* 7 (24), Theophilus had recourse to drastic

<sup>658</sup> Festal Letters were written by the bishop of Alexandria before Lent to announce the date of Easter. Five by Theophilus are extant in fragments. The matter was indeed important for Theophilus, who saw in it a question of authority and even wrote a letter to Emperor Theodosius asserting the right of the bishop of Alexandria to establish the date of Easter every year. Little else is extant of Theophilus's works, much of which is incomplete or of doubtful paternity. We have fragments in Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic and Armenian.

methods. The Origenian monks' cells were burnt along with their books, and more than three hundred monks had to flee. The same is confirmed by George of Alexandria: the Tall Brothers "insisted that the divinity has no form, and rightly so. Thus, Theophilus falsely accused them before the Egyptian monks and stirred that stupid mass against them [...] Finally, after many vexations and plots against them [μετὰ πολλὰς κακώσεις καὶ ἐπιβουλὰς] and after the fire that was set against their cells [μετὰ τὸν ἐμπρησμόν τὸν ἐκκαέντα κατὰ τῶν κελλίων αὐτῶν], they fled from there to Constantinople" (*ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 96, 82a). It is interesting to observe that Theophilus's official justifications and positions seem to dramatically differ from his own convictions and practice, and this especially in relation to the issue of apokatastasis, which is the most relevant to the present investigation. In his official letter to the bishops of Palestine and Cyprus in 400 CE, which we know from Jerome's translation (*Ep.* 92), Theophilus claims that it was local priests and abbots who begged him to intervene in the Nitria monasteries, but the situation reflected in his own private letters is remarkably different. Indeed, from the Greek fragment 1 Richard, it transpires that Theophilus had in fact sent investigators to test the Origenian monks' orthodoxy. They examined the monks on Trinitarian matters, in which respect the ascetics proved fully orthodox, that is, anti-"Arian." They were even willing to renounce Origen's position that prayers should be addressed to the Father and not to Jesus, a position that was perfectly comprehensible from Origen's viewpoint, but that sounded dangerously "Arian" in the day of Theophilus. But the bishop was not satisfied with this, and ordered his investigators to question the monks about two specific anthropological and eschatological points: the union of the souls with the bodies and the eventual restoration of the devil and of sinners.<sup>659</sup>

First of all, it is significant that Theophilus did not speak of this in the least in his official letters, and had these examinations carried on in secrecy. Also, it is not less significant that Theophilus was perfectly aware that the core of Origen's thought was not a purported Trinitarian subordinationism, which indeed he never professed, but his notions of the *logika* and their destinies, culminating in their eventual apokatastasis. Indeed, the so-called preexistence of the souls and the eventual apokatastasis are indicated as the essence of Origen's thought in the *Epistula Cyrilli ad imperatorem circa Antiochenum Iohannem* (ACO ed. E. Schwartz I,4, p. 211), or better the comments

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<sup>659</sup> See Prinzivalli, *Magister*, 218.

of the deacon Rusticus that follow the quotation of Cyril's letter in his *Synodicon* (in *Collectio Casinensis* 288a): *Eusebius in opere apologetico pro Origene et dogmatibus eius, id est praeexistentia et restitutione ...*<sup>660</sup>

And yet apokatastasis, at least that of humans, had not yet officially entered the Origenian debate. Indeed, albeit he knew very well that apokatastasis was the heart of Origen's thought, nevertheless in his official letters stemming from 400–404 CE Theophilus does not dare to include the restoration of sinners in the formal accusations against Origen. He limits himself to condemn, sometimes, that of the devil. This further proves that still around 400 CE many orthodox Christians regarded with favour the theory of the apokatastasis of all humans. Indeed, this is confirmed by the passage transmitted in Basil's *Regulae* that I have examined in the section devoted to Basil, and that laments the widespread diffusion of the doctrine of apokatastasis among many Christians still at that time. In that very period, Gregory Nyssen—who even proclaimed the restoration of the devil—provides an outstanding example of this. He died in 394 CE or soon after, when the Origenian crisis began to explode. If Theophilus, who was well aware that the core of Origen's doctrine (philosophy of history, anthropology, eschatology, theodicy) was the doctrine of apokatastasis, nevertheless decided not to include it in his official accusations against Origen, this is very probably due to the fact that he knew that many Christians still upheld that theory. This also helps to explain the reason why the response of the bishops of Palestine to Theophilus was negative, as is attested to by Jerome (*Ep.* 93). They claimed they had never heard anyone support the doctrines denounced by Theophilus. As for Origen's own doctrines, they knew that they were not heretical, either from the Trinitarian point of view or in respect to the resurrection, and they did not deem the doctrine of apokatastasis heretical. The bishop of Jerusalem himself was an Origenian.

Theophilus's synodal letter dated to 400 CE further shows that in fact he attacked a contemporary Origenism that was far from being Origen's own thought.<sup>661</sup> In this letter Theophilus lists some accusations against Origen

<sup>660</sup> Deacon Rusticus, a collaborator of pope Vigilius then excommunicated by him and exiled by Justinian in 553, was the redactor of the *Collectio Casinensis*. When he returned to Constantinople, in the monastery of the Akoimatoi he composed the *Synodicon*, which is known thanks to Count Irenaeus's *Tragedy*. The passage at stake in the *Synodicon* comes after Irenaeus's quotation of Cyril of Alexandria's Letter to Theodosius II. One statement of Cyril leads Rusticus to the remark I quoted on Pamphilus's apology and Origen's ideas.

<sup>661</sup> Clark, *Controversy*, 107–108.



that will return again and again in his later official letters: the idea that prayers ought to be addressed to the sole Father, the supposed subordination of the Son, and the limited duration of his eschatological reign. Origen in fact grounded his interpretation on 1 Cor 15:26–28, according to which the Son will have to reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, up to the last enemy, death. Then, Origen did not claim that the Son will cease to reign, but rather that he will hand the kingdom to God the Father, that God may be “all in all.” Origen followed Paul’s text closely, and even countered any subordinationistic interpretation of it, thus strongly influencing Gregory Nyssen’s anti-subordinationistic interpretation of 1 Cor 15:26–28.<sup>662</sup> The other accusations levelled against Origen in the same letter were also eschatological: they concerned Origen’s purported denial of the resurrection and the apokatastasis of the devil. Again, there is no mention of the apokatastasis of all human beings among these accusations.

Some of these accusations return in fr. 3 Richard, datable to 403 CE. Here Theophilus accuses Origen of supporting the subordination of the Son to the Father and of denying the resurrection of the bodies. The latter is also the reason why in fr. 5 Richard Theophilus blames the Origenists, accusing Origen of believing that Christ will be crucified again for the demons.<sup>663</sup> In fr. 8 Richard Theophilus shows the same misunderstanding as Methodius and Epiphanius do regarding Origen’s concept of the permanence of the εἶδος of the earthly body in the body of the resurrection and the vanishing of the ὑποκείμενον. Theophilus, too, mistook the metaphysical form (εἶδος) of Origen’s terminology for “shape” (σχήμα).

In fr. 9 Richard Theophilus accuses Origen of teaching that souls fell from heaven, and in fr. 13 he even convicts him of idolatry. Fragment 1 Declerck, from the acts of a synod in Alexandria summoned by Theophilus in 399–400 CE, perhaps deriving from Theophilus’s lost work *Against Origen* mentioned by Gennadius, VI 34, describes how Origen was chased from Alexandria by bishop Heraclas and accuses him of having taught the preexistence of souls and their imprisonment in bodies as a result of their sins, for the sake of purification and correction. This very inaccurate rendering of Origen’s thought is also refuted by Theophilus in Fr. 2. Likewise, in his homily *In mysticam coenam*, stemming from 400 CE, Theophilus refutes doctrines that are not Origen’s proper, but rather typical of later Origenism. In

<sup>662</sup> See Ramelli, “*In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius ...*” Henri Crouzel also thought that Origen did not teach that the eschatological reign of Christ will come to an end.

<sup>663</sup> This accusation is ungrounded; see Ramelli, “The Universal and Eternal Validity.”

the festal letter of 401 CE, preserved in a Latin translation by Jerome (*Ep.* 96), Theophilus repeats some standard accusations against Origen: the “pre-existence of souls,” the eschatological vanishing of bodies, the limited duration of the reign of Christ, and the eventual restoration of the devil. It is worth noticing that, again, the only kind of apokatastasis that is criticised is that of the devil, not that of human beings. In this document, moreover, Theophilus introduces two new elements among his charges against Origen: one is that Origen presented marriage and procreation as impure, thus contradicting Gen 1:28; I have already pointed out this accusation, and its unreliability, in Epiphanius. The other charge has to do with the apokatastasis of demons; Theophilus objects that these cannot be saved in that they have no part in the Eucharist. Again, Theophilus criticises the doctrine of apokatastasis insofar as it is applied to the devil and demons; no single word is officially directed against the universal restoration of human beings, as though Theophilus knew that this view was still widely accepted in his day. It is even possible that Theophilus, too, personally accepted it.

Theophilus's festal letter of 402 CE, this also preserved in a Latin version by Jerome (*Ep.* 98), criticises Origen for his doctrine of the souls' fall and the origin of the soul from the “cooling off” of an intellect. Theophilus objects that at least the soul of Christ, ardent with love, cannot have experienced a cooling off. In fact, neither did Origen ascribe a cooling off to Christ's soul. Finally, in the festal letter of 404 CE (*Hier. Ep.* 100), Theophilus introduces his attacks on Origen and his followers only after much else. He mentions with contentment that the Origenists have been defeated and blames once again the doctrine of the “fall of the souls into the bodies” and Origen's purported contempt for marriage, as though these two elements were the sole and main constituents of Origen's whole thought. It is also significant of the value and accuracy of Theophilus's accounts of Origen's thought that here he accuses again Origen of idolatry. He claims that Origen's notion of God was like that of idols, in a masculine or feminine form, whereas Origen insisted on the full incorporeality of God, even maintaining that only the Holy Trinity can live without any kind of matter and body. Such accusations have become standard lore, repeated on and on, and have very little to do with Origen's authentic thought. Indeed, according to the above-mentioned Gobar (*ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 232, p. 291b), Theophilus's charges against Origen, like those of Epiphanius, were ungrounded in that they “completely distorted Origen's ideas.” But even among these charges, none concerns the apokatastasis of human beings; Theophilus, indeed, never included this point in his official accusations against Origen.

Theophilus's anti-Origenian activity was clearly inspired more by political than by doctrinal reasons. This is all the clearer if one considers that the bishop, after chasing from Egypt the so-called Tall Brothers, the Origenian monks Ammonius, Euthymius, Eusebius, and Dioscorus,<sup>664</sup> and triggering the whole process that brought about John Chrysostom's exile and death, was reconciled with the very monks whom he had expelled, according to Socrates (*HE* 6,16) and Sozomen (*HE* 8,17). In Socrates' words, he "was back into communion with the group of Dioscorus, those dubbed Tall Brothers, immediately after the deposition of John." Indeed, Socrates *HE* 6,9 ff. and Sozomen are important sources concerning the so-called Tall Brothers, as well as Palladius is. In *HL* 12 Palladius praises Ammonius as knowledgeable about Origen's and Didymus the Blind's works; in *HL* 49 and elsewhere the monks of Nitria are praised for their study and askesis. Palladius also mentions them together with Evagrius: "those belonging to the circle of saints Ammonius and Evagrius" (*HL* 24,2).<sup>665</sup> Evagrius himself attests that he was with Ammonius when they visited John of Lycopolis in the Thebaid desert (*Antirr.* 6,16).

The Tall Brothers, until 400 CE, were esteemed and honoured by Theophilus because of their asceticism and anti-Arianism. Theophilus had even ordained one of them, Dioscours, bishop of Hermoupolis in Egypt, and had wanted to ordain bishop another of them, though unsuccessfully. Also, two of the Tall Brothers were ordained presbyters in order to help Theophilus, who lived in close and constant contact with them. This, of course, reduced their ascetic and philosophical life, the same life as Pamphilus and Eusebius ascribed to Origen. But after the manifestation of Theophilus's sudden hostility the Tall Brothers left Egypt together with Isidore and, according to Sozomen, with about eighty monks, for Palestine and then Constantinople.

In 400 CE, Theophilus wrote to Epiphanius to let him know that he now agreed with him, to attack the works of Origen, and to invoke a council in Cyprus for the condemnation of Origenism. This was done, and the examination of Origen's works was forbidden. Theophilus did so even though previously he had blamed Epiphanius for his anthropomorphism. This is telling in regard to the opportunistic and contingent nature of Theophilus's anti-Origenistic exploit. Indeed, after the incident with the Tall Brothers, Theophilus even returned to studying Origen's works (and indeed he never

<sup>664</sup> *Dial. Joh. Chrys.* 7–8, ascribed to Palladius. Cf. George of Alexandria *ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 96, 81b–82a: "The monasteries of Egypt were led by Dioscorus, Ammonius, Euthymius, and Eusebius, brothers who were dubbed Long or Tall due to their bodily stature."

<sup>665</sup> Cf. *HL* 33: "Evagrius's community" and 35: "the circle of St. Evagrius."

ceased to use allegorical exegesis of Scripture in his homilies). Socrates in *HE* 6,17 reports that he was criticised for doing so after condemning Origen's errors, but he defended himself by claiming that it was possible to pick flowers among Origen's writings, and to avoid thorns. Socrates adds an observation of his own, that Theophilus did not consider that the words of wise persons are like a spur, and those who are pricked by their hidden meanings should not be disobedient toward them. With this, Socrates clearly means that Origen's works are difficult to understand and have hidden senses, like Scripture, which one should not simply reject in a selective manner, as Theophilus claimed he did, but rather try to penetrate.

In any case, Socrates' report on Theophilus's behaviour and answer is perfectly in line with his presentation of Theophilus's anti-Origenistic activity as animated by political ecclesiastical motives (*HE* 6,10). For Socrates relates that, when he condemned the books of Origen, his purpose was not in the least the prohibition of reading Origen, which he himself blatantly transgressed, but a retaliation against Dioscorus and the Tall Brothers. In general, according to Socrates, his purpose in the whole Origenistic business was to deprive John Chrysostom of his episcopal dignity and power.<sup>666</sup> It is indicative, not only of Socrates' own penchant, but also of people's solidarity with the Origenian monks that, as Socrates himself narrates in *HE* 6,17, when Dioscorus, one of the Tall Brothers and the bishop of Hermoupolis, died, shortly after being exiled by Theophilus, he "was honoured with a magnificent burial and tomb."

*Theotimus of Scythia:  
A Defender of Origen's Method and Eschatology*

Socrates in *HE* 6,12<sup>667</sup> narrates that, under Theophilus's instigation, Epiphanius went to Constantinople, bringing along a document containing, not

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<sup>666</sup> Russell too, *Theophilus*, even if he endeavours to be "fair to Theophilus" (3), acknowledges his key role in the deposition of Chrysostom, due to a conflict over power, and not faith; for Russell, Theophilus felt that the authority of the siege of Constantinople intruded into that of Alexandria. Russell also recognises that Theophilus's whole anti-Origenistic activity was due to political and not theological reasons; he did use, very rhetorically, theological motivations to justify it, but these were not his concern. He was concerned with the enforcement of the authority of the siege of Alexandria, and employed theological justifications for the oppression and exile of his opponents.

<sup>667</sup> Socrate de Constantinople, *Histoire ecclésiastique Livres IV–VI*, texte grec de l'éd. G. Chr. Hansen (GCS), trad. par P. Périchon et P. Maraval, introd. et notes par P. Maraval; Sources Chrétiennes 505 (Paris, 2006).

the anathematisation of Origen, but the condemnation of his works. He summoned the bishops who were in Constantinople and read them this condemnation; Socrates—who appreciated rational argument, which is of course related to his admiration of Origen<sup>668</sup>—adds that Epiphanius could produce no *reason* for that condemnation, apart from saying that Theophilus and he himself wanted them to be condemned. Socrates emphasises that they had no rational argument, but only a claim to authority. Some bishops agreed, out of reverence for Epiphanius, but many did not.

Among those who refused was Theotimus, the bishop of Tomi in Scythia (392–403/7), a follower of the Nicene faith<sup>669</sup> and a friend of Chrysostom. It is meaningful that he was both a friend of Chrysostom and an Origenian. At this point, Socrates reports the speech of Theotimus, who refused to attack a man who had died in peace long since, had been never condemned by the Church, and said pious things. Theotimus was a convert from paganism and, not by chance, a professional philosopher. Sozomen attests that Theotimus “had been brought up in the practice of philosophy” and “always kept the long hair which he wore when he first devoted himself to the practice of philosophy” (*HE* 7,26).<sup>670</sup> This is why he valued rational argument and, like Pamphilus, defended Origen by means of his works, directly reading a passage of his in public:

One of them was Theotimus, the bishop of Scythia. He replied to Epiphanius as follows: “I do not intend, o Epiphanius, to insult this man, who died long ago in sanctity. Nor do I dare attempt a blasphemous thing, condemning what those before us did not reject, especially in that I know that there is no bad teaching in Origen’s books.” And putting forward a book of Origen, he read a passage from it, and indicated in it the expositions good for the Church. After which, he added: “Those who abuse these thoughts do not realise that they also abuse the things on which these discourses focus.” This is what Theotimus, famous for his piety and the rectitude of his life, replied to Epiphanius.

<sup>668</sup> See, e.g., Ch. Eucken, “Philosophie und Dialektik in der Kirchengeschichte des Sokrates,” in *Die Welt des Sokrates*, 96–110.

<sup>669</sup> Archimandrite Carosus at the council of Chalcedon attested that he was baptised by Theotimus who recommended that he keep the Nicene faith.

<sup>670</sup> On Sozomen’s relationship to Socrates see Th. Urbainczyk, “Observations on the Differences between the Church Histories of Socrates and Sozomen,” *Historia* 46 (1997) 355–373, according to whom Sozomen did not limit himself to elaborate and correct Socrates’ work; he had a different notion of historiography.

Sozomen's account seems to depend on that of Socrates on this point.<sup>671</sup> Like Origen, Theotimus was an ecclesiastical man, a philosopher, and a writer. Jerome in his *De viris illustribus* ascribes to him treatises in the form of dialogues: "Theotimus, bishop of Tomi, in Scythia, has published brief and epigrammatical treatises, in the form of dialogues, and in old-fashioned style. I hear that he is now writing other works." Indeed, Theotimus, who died in 407 CE, was still active while Jerome was writing.<sup>672</sup>

*Palladius, the Tall Brothers, and Evagrianism  
in Egypt after their Exile*

The monks whom Theophilus exiled in 399 CE, the closest Origenians and about eighty others, and Isidore, took refuge in Palestine and then in Constantinople, where two of them died. There, they were received and protected first by deacon Olympias and then by her bishop, John Chrysostom. This was also a reason for John's exile in 404 CE. John wrote to Theophilus, in hopes that he would receive them back into communion, since their theological ideas were sound; if Theophilus deemed their orthodoxy doubtful, John asked him to send someone to accuse them. Theophilus never replied to John's letter. The story of how he received and helped the Origenian monks is narrated by Socrates (*HE* 6,7–9) and Sozomen (*HE* 8,11–13), and in the *Dialogue on the Life of St. John Chrysostom*,<sup>673</sup> stemming from the years 407–408 CE and ascribed to Palladius (363–430). From here the key role played by Olympias is clear. She was probably a sympathiser of Origen's ideas herself. Gregory Nazianzen sent her a poem for her marriage with Nebridius, the prefect of Constantinople, who soon died, when she was in her twenties. Olympias then refused to remarry, notwithstanding emperor Theodosius's

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<sup>671</sup> *HE* 8,17: "Theotimus, bishop of Scythia, strongly opposed the moves of Epiphanius, who had convinced some bishops in Constantinople to approve of the decrees which he had issued against the discourses/works/theories of Origen, and told him that it was not right to abuse the memory of a man who had long been numbered with the dead; nor was it without blasphemy to counter the conclusion to which the ancients had arrived on this score, and to set aside their decisions. While speaking along these lines, Theotimus put forward a book of Origen that he had brought with him, read aloud a passage good for the education of the Church, and observed that those who condemned such ideas acted absurdly, for they risked abusing the very subjects that these words treated."

<sup>672</sup> Fragments of his works are found in John Damascene's *Sacra Parallela* II 640, 675, 694, 785 Le Quien.

<sup>673</sup> Critical edition by A.M. Malingrey and Ph. Leclercq: *Palladius, Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1988). English translation by R.T. Meyer: *Palladius, Dialogue on the Life of Saint John Chrysostom* (New York, 1985).

contrary will; she rather withdrew to ascetic life and founded a monastery in Constantinople. Theodosius, out of vengeance, deprived her of the administration of her enormous wealth, but she remained unimpressed, and in 391 CE Theodosius returned her her money, which she used for charitable works. She was then ordered a deacon by Nectarius, the predecessor of John Chrysostom, in spite of her age, thirty years or so (Sozomen *HE* 8,9). What is particularly relevant to her Origenian allegiance, Gregory of Nyssa dedicated to her his exegesis of the Song of Songs. Peter of Sebaste, Gregory and Basil's brother, was the object of Olympia's beneficial activity, as is attested by Palladius, *Dial.* 17. The same source, *Dial.* 16–17, also recounts how she courageously received the Origenian monks chased by Theophilus.

In Ch. 16 Palladius reports a dialogue between deacon Theodorus and bishop John Chrysostom. Theodorus at first argues that Olympias did not well to receive the Origenians, even though he acknowledges that Theophilus simply “acted out of anger” when he chased them away from Egypt. But Olympias with her daring act attracted Theophilus's hostility onto herself and her bishop. John defends deacon Olympias: he accuses Theophilus of having expelled the monks out of mere anger (again), and praises Olympias for having imitated the Lord's mercy. What is more, John defends the Origenian monks and ascribes virtue and sanctity to them, who even managed to convert many people from vice to virtue. In the end, John convinces his interlocutor that Theophilus had exiled the Origenian monks and blamed Olympias only out of anger, envy, and attachment to power. In Ch. 17 John provides a very positive description of the Origenian monks, as full of wisdom, learning, and virtue, and concludes that these are the monks whom “a courageous woman has received [...] a deacon gave hospitality to them.” She is praised in the churches for many other reasons as well; by receiving them, she has followed the example of the good Samaritan. It is not accidental indeed that another Origenian such as Gregory of Nyssa dedicated to Olympias his last work, in which he supported again his doctrine of apokatastasis. George of Alexandria, too, *ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod.* 96, 82a praises John for receiving the Tall Brothers: “the most compassionate [συμπάθεστατος] John received them in all benevolence.”

Palladius, the definitely partial teller of this story of Olympias, John, and the Origenians, was an Origenian monk himself, bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia from 400 CE, a supporter of John Chrysostom, and an acquaintance of the Tall Brothers, Evagrius, Rufinus, and Melania Senior.<sup>674</sup> He even

<sup>674</sup> In favour of the hypothesis that Palladius is the author of the *Dialogue* are, among oth-

speaks of Evagrius as his teacher (*HL* 23). When Chrysostom was exiled, Palladius went to Rome and tried hard to have him restored to his siege, but he was banned himself, to Syene (Thebaid) in Egypt. Then, after Chrysostom's death, which occurred in a short while in exile, Palladius probably composed the aforementioned *Dialogue* to defend at least his memory. He also requested that Theophilus be put on trial qua responsible for the exile of John.<sup>675</sup> The latter was accused, among other imputations, also of having invaded Theophilus's jurisdiction when he received the Origenian monks, and even of having received money from Olympias, his deacon (who was very rich, but also free to give her money to whomever she liked, all the more if this was for charitable and ecclesiastical purposes).<sup>676</sup> The *Dialogue*, which is probably by him, was inspired by Plato's *Phaedo*, like Gregory Nyssen's *De Anima*.

In Egypt, before being elected bishop, Palladius had become acquainted with the Desert Fathers, Macarius of Alexandria, and Evagrius Ponticus. He had known Evagrius personally, as he himself attests in *HL* 12. 23. 24. 35. 38. 47, and it is in Evagrius's spirit that, after his return from his own exile, around 418–420 CE he wrote his *Historia Lausiaca*<sup>677</sup> (and in the same

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ers, Devos, Dunn, Cattaneo, Dattrino, Miranda, Zeegers-Vander Vorst, and Katos. See P. Devos, "Approches de Pallade à travers le *Dialogue sur Chrysostome* et l'*Histoire Lausiaque*," *Analecta Bollandiana* 107 (1989) 243–266, who bases his argument on the similarity between this *Dialogue* and Palladius's *Historia Lausiaca*; N. Zeegers-Vander Vorst, "À propos du *Dialogue de Pallade sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome*," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 85 (1990) 30–41; L. Dattrino (tr.), *Palladio. Dialogo sulla vita di Giovanni Crisostomo* (Rome, 1995); E. Cattaneo, "Le cause della decadenza del clero nel *Dialogo sulla vita di Crisostomo* di Palladio," *Augustinianum* 37 (1997) 333–349; A. Miranda, "Autorità ecclesiastica e giurisdizione civile nel *Dialogo sulla vita di Crisostomo* di Palladio," *Studia Patristica* 49 (2002) 405–423; G.D. Dunn, "The Date of Innocent I's Epistula 12 and the Second Exile of John Chrysostom," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 45 (2005) 155–170; D. Katos, "Socratic Dialogue or Courtroom Debate? Judicial Rhetoric and Stasis Theory in the *Dialogue on the Life of St. John Chrysostom*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 42–69, who grounds his demonstration on the presence in the *Dialogue* of principles of judicial rhetoric and late antique *stasis* theory, well known to Palladius, and argues that he wrote it, not as a biography, but as a case for the restoration of John to the diptychs as a bishop. Now D. Katos, *Palladius of Helenopolis, the Origenist Advocate* (Oxford, 2011).

<sup>675</sup> On those who supported John in and after his exile see M. Wallraff, "Tod im Exil. Reaktionen auf die Todesnachricht des Johannes Chrysostomos und Konstituierung einer 'johannitischen' Opposition," in *Chrysostomosbilder in 1600 Jahren*, eds. Id.–R. Brändle (Berlin–New York, 2008), 23–37.

<sup>676</sup> See J. Tloka, *Griechische Christen, christliche Griechen* (Tübingen, 2005), 159–160; E.D. Hunt, "Palladius of Helenopolis: A Party and its Supporters in the Church of the Late Fourth Century," *Journal of Theological Studies* 24 (1973) 456–480.

<sup>677</sup> R. Draguet, "L'*Histoire Lausiaque*: une oeuvre écrite dans l'esprit d'Évagre," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 41 (1946) 321–364; 42 (1947) 5–49. Edition and German translation



spirit he wrote the *Dialogue*<sup>678</sup>). In *HL* 86 Palladius speaks of Evagrius in the most praiseful terms. Palladius much appreciated another faithful Origenian as well: Rufinus, of whom he says that nobody was more learned or kinder (*HL* 98). From Palladius's work, including his account of John Chrysostom's character and trial,<sup>679</sup> his sympathy for the Origenian tradition is transparent. There can be little doubt that he espoused the apokatastasis doctrine.

*Shenoute as a Continuator of  
the Accusations of Epiphanius and Theophilus*

Origen's and, even more, Evagrius's heritage in Egypt<sup>680</sup> did not disappear after the exile of the Origenian monks, as is confirmed by two letters of Theophilus from 400 and 401 CE (preserved by Justinian, *Lib. adv. Orig.* PG 86,967) and by Shenoute's *Contra Origenistas et Gnosticos*, one of his most extensive works. Shenoute was the archimandrite of the White Monastery in Upper Egypt—a Pachomian monastery, one of those which attached themselves to Pachomius, who is presented as an anti-Origenian in a part of his

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von D. Schütz, *Historia Lausiaca. Die frühen Heiligen in der Wüste* (Basel, 1987). French translation by N. Molinier, *Pallade d'Hélénopolis, Histoire lausiaque* (Bégrolles-en-Mauge, 1999). See also N. Molinier, *Ascèse, contemplation et ministère d'après l'Histoire Lausiaque de Pallade d'Hélénopolis* (Bégrolles-en-Mauges, 1995) and G. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2000). According to Bunge, one of the main sources of the *Historia Lausiaca* is a book by Palladius himself on the sayings and deeds of the Desert Fathers. See G. Bunge, "Palladiana I: Introduction aux fragments coptes de l'*Histoire lausiaque*," *Studia Monastica* 32 (1990) 79–129. On the genesis of the *Historia Lausiaca* see also K. Nickau, "Eine *Historia Lausiaca* ohne Lausus: Überlegungen zur Hypothese von René Draguet über den Ursprung der *Historia Lausiaca*," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 5 (2001) 131–139. For a comparative approach between pagan and Christian hagiography see U. Criscuolo, "Biografia e agiografia fra pagani e cristiani fra il IV e il V secolo: le *Vitae* di Eunapio e la *Historia Lausiaca*," *Salesianum* 67 (2005) 771–798.

<sup>678</sup> This is underlined by G.M. De Durand, "Évagre le Pontique et le Dialogue sur la vie de saint Jean Chrysostome," *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 77 (1976) 191–206, at least in respect to Evagrius's psychology and ethics.

<sup>679</sup> F. van Ommeslaeghe, "Que vaut le témoignage de Pallade sur le procès de saint Jean Chrysostome?," *Analecta Bollandiana* 115 (1977) 389–414, who values Palladius as a witness to the events anterior to John's trial, outside Constantinople. M. Wallraff, "Le conflit de Jean Chrysostome avec la cour chez les historiens ecclésiastiques grecs," in *L'historiographie de l'Église des premiers siècles*, eds. B. Poudéron–Y.-M. Duval (Paris, 2001), 361–370, observes that Palladius is even much more favourable than Socrates is to John Chrysostom: while Socrates does not side with John in his conflict with the imperial court, Palladius does.

<sup>680</sup> Guillaumont, *Kephalaia*, 120–123; Clark, *Controversy*, 44 ff.

biographical tradition<sup>681</sup>—during the first half of the fifth century CE, and one of the first authors who wrote extensively in Coptic; though, he was also acquainted with Greek Christian works, among which those of Athanasius and probably also of Evagrius.<sup>682</sup> Thirty years after Theophilus, he contrasted Evagrianism, which had spread among the monks, in the desert of Thebais. In a few decades, this will also be one of the causes that will lead to Justinian's condemnation "of Origen," which was in fact directed against developed and radicalised forms of Evagrianism.

Shenoute received a letter from bishop Dioscorus of Alexandria, who considered Origenism to be a serious danger in the fifth century. He warned Shenoute against Elias, a priest who was deposed for "Origenism." The Origenism that Shenoute and Dioscorus countered was one marked by Gnostic influences and by that of Evagrius.<sup>683</sup> Dioscorus was worried that Origen's books were circulating in the region of Thebaid. Shenoute's *Contra Origenistas*<sup>684</sup> documents what kind of Origenism he had in mind when he criticised it, since he contrasts the subordination of the Son, the denial of the resurrection of the body, the preexistence of souls, and a plurality of

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<sup>681</sup> On the White Monastery see now E.S. Bolman–S. Davis–G. Pyke, "Shenoute and a Recently Discovered Tomb Chapel at the White Monastery," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 (2010) 453–462. Unlike the parallel passage in the Coptic biographies, a passage in the Greek biography of Pachomius shows a concern about Pachomius's orthodoxy; it recounts that Pachomius forbade the reading of Origen's books in his monastery and, when he found a work of Origen in the monastery, he sequestered it and threw it into a river. This seems to be an anachronism that was added afterwards only in the Greek recension. See S. Rubenson, "Origen and the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century," in *Origeniana VII* (Leuven, 1999), 319–337, *praes.* 329–330. According to Jenott and Pagels, "Antony's Letters," 569, both the Greek biography of Pachomius and Athanasius's biography of Anthony respond to the intention of aligning these saints to the orthodoxy of the day of the writers. On Pachomius's *Praecepta ac leges* see now C. Joest, "Die *Leges* Pachoms und die Mönchsregeln der Pachomianer," *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012) 160–189.

<sup>682</sup> His bio-hagiography was composed by a disciple of his, Besa, *Life of Shenoute*, and has been translated into English by D.H. Bell (Kalamazoo, 1983). On Shenoute see R. Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery* (Oxford, 2004); F. Feder, "Das Shenoute-Puzzle: Die Rekonstruktion des literarischen Werkes des Shenoute von Atripe," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 105 (2010) 142–151; H.-J. Cristea, *Shenoute von Atripe: Contra Origenistas*, ed. of the Coptic with German tr. and notes (Tübingen, 2011).

<sup>683</sup> A. Grillmeier, "La peste d'Origène," in *Alexandrina* (Paris, 1987), 221–237: 236; Clark, *Controversy*, 152 ff.

<sup>684</sup> It is edited and translated by T. Orlandi (Rome, 1985). C.T. Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies. Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe* (Philadelphia, 2007), ch. 4 studies Shenoute's polemic against the Origenists on the resurrected body; see also H. Lundhaug, "Shenoute's Heresiological Polemics and its Context(s)," in *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation*, eds. J. Ulrich–A.C. Jacobsen–D. Brakke (Frankfurt, 2011), 239–261. On Shenoute's hagiographical biography see N. Lubomierski, *De Vita Sinuthii* (Tübingen, 2007).

worlds—all theories that Origen had never supported. Shenoute's accusations against Origen in his treatise focus on his prescription that only the Father should be addressed prayers, that he was a subordinationist in the Trinitarian field, that he denied the resurrection of bodies, and that he supported the preexistence of souls and their fall into bodies. These accusations are patently very similar to those which I have already highlighted in Epiphanius and Theophilus. Again, it is interesting to notice that Shenoute does not include among his accusations that of teaching the eventual apokatastasis of all human beings.

### *Cyril of Alexandria*

Cyril was a nephew of Theophilus of Alexandria and became bishop of Alexandria himself in the years 412–444. He received an ascetic education at Nitria and Scetis, where he studied the Bible and Fathers profoundly influenced by Origen such as Eusebius, Athanasius, and Basil. He was deeply influenced by Athanasius,<sup>685</sup> who admired Origen. It is significant that precisely at the outburst of the Origenistic controversy his uncle Theophilus summoned him back from the desert. This may be due to the fact that Theophilus knew that Cyril's teacher was an Origenian (he may have been Serapion the Wise, a disciple of St. Anthony and fellow-disciple of Athanasius; perhaps also Macarius, a friend of Serapion's, or Abba Joseph, a disciple of Macarius and St. Anthony; in any case, the Origenian allegiances of all of them are clear). Cyril knew the works of Origen and Didymus; he very probably also met the latter when he was the head of the catechetical school in Alexandria. He was learned and interested in Greek philosophy; he had access to the library of the above-mentioned catechetical school and to the episcopal library of Alexandria. He cites and knows the faithful Origenian Peter of Alexandria, Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and the early Jerome, when he still was an enthusiastic Origenian. His formula in *Comm. in Io.* 1,293, "everything is from [παρά] the Father through [διὰ] the Son in [ἐν] the Spirit" exactly echoes that of Gregory of Nyssa in *Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres dii*, which in turn depended on Origen.

Like Origen, Cyril mostly wrote exegetical works, and followed Origen's allegorical and spiritual exegesis, as is shown especially by his Commentary

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<sup>685</sup> This is well shown by S. Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy* (Oxford, 2004).

on John,<sup>686</sup> which was composed about one decade before his episcopacy. First he usually gives the literal exegesis, and then the allegorical and spiritual reading.<sup>687</sup> Cyril's very use of πνευματικόν for the spiritual hermeneutics comes from Origen's theorisation of Biblical allegorical exegesis (*Princ.* 4.3.5), and Cyril's avoidance of the terms ἀλληγορία and ἀλληγορέω seems to me to simply reflect Origen's own avoidance (these terms being compromised by their "pagan" and "Gnostic" use). Indeed, I do not think that the absence of these terms means that Cyril did not intend to practice allegorical exegesis,<sup>688</sup> but rather that he was following Origen, who indeed allegorised Scripture, but endeavoured not to use these terms.<sup>689</sup> Cyril's use of Hebrew etymologies is another aspect of Origen's heritage. In specific exegeses Cyril often follows Origen, for instance in his *Commentary on John*.<sup>690</sup>

Interestingly, Cyril's interpretation of 1 Cor 15:28—Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's favourite passage in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis—is the same as given by Gregory of Nyssa in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, who in turn derived it from Origen.<sup>691</sup> Cyril explains that the Son's submission to the Father is not a sign of the Son's inferiority, but

he submits *from the point of view of the salvific economy*, for our sake. Since the human being, having sinned, ended up with being submitted to corruption, and, because of the devil and the demons, detached itself from God [...] then the Only-Begotten became a human being for our sake, and *has annihilated* [κατήργηκε] *the power of death* and also *eliminated* [ἐξῆλπε] *the root of death, which is sin*; he *threw out* [ἐξέβαλε] *the ruler of this world*. After doing all this and *bringing the whole salvific economy to completion*, he will hand to the Father the Kingdom<sup>692</sup> *that once upon a time had been stolen from him* and

<sup>686</sup> See L.M. Farag, *St. Cyril of Alexandria, A New Testament Exegete* (Piscataway, NJ, 2007).

<sup>687</sup> On Cyril's dependence on Origen see J.W. Trigg, "Origen and Cyril of Alexandria: Continuities and Discontinuities in their Approach to the Gospel of John," in *Origeniana VIII*, ed. L. Perrone (Leuven, 2003), 955–964; also M.-O. Boulnois, "Cyrille d'Alexandrie est-il un témoin de la controverse origéniste sur l'identité du corps mortel et du corps ressuscité?," *ibid.* 843 ff.

<sup>688</sup> As Farag, *Cyril*, 253, has it.

<sup>689</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Origen and the Stoic Allegorical Tradition: Continuity and Innovation," *Invigilata Lucernis* 28 (2006) 195–226.

<sup>690</sup> E.g., the allegory of Egypt as darkness, pleasure, and life in the present world (*Comm. in Io.* 1.459–460) is inspired by Philo, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa. See my "Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 20 (2008) 55–99.

<sup>691</sup> Ed. P.E. Pusey, *S. patris nostri Cyrilli in D. Joannis evangelium*, III (Oxford, 1872, reprint 1965), 305–306. See Ramelli, "The Trinitarian Theology."

<sup>692</sup> That is, humanity.

had passed under the power of others,<sup>693</sup> so to exert his power over all beings on earth, after restoring them [ἀποκαταστήσας], having them return to himself, once he has annihilated [κατηργημένου] death and satan, who had tyrannised them, the Son will have again, and for the world to come, the excellence of the power over all [πάντων].

Christ has liberated humanity not only from physical death, but also from sin and the power of the devil. The “Kingdom” that Christ will hand to the Father is for Cyril, just as for Gregory of Nyssa, the whole of humanity, which once was alienated from God by the devil, but will be appropriated again by God in the end, with a supreme act of οἰκείωσις.<sup>694</sup> Cyril is not wary of overtly speaking of “the restoration, or apokatastasis, of all beings on earth.” His closeness to Origen is palpable.

What is often considered to be a refutation of Origen in *Comm. in Io.* 1,9 is in fact nothing of the sort, given that Cyril never cites Origen’s name there, nor is he disproving Origen’s ideas. Likewise, in *Ep.* 81 Cyril refutes those who denied the resurrection of the body, but Origen was not among these. And in *Comm. in Io.* 1,115–125 Cyril refutes the notion of the preexistence of souls and their incarnation as a punishment, which, again, does not reflect Origen’s thought. Cyril never states that he is refuting Origen.

Cyril interpreted the garden of Gethsemane as the symbol “of the original Paradise,” τοῦ ἀρχαίου Παραδείσου, and the suffering of Christ as the way to restore humanity to its ancient condition, εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον (*Comm. in Io.* 3,15). Gregory Nyssen, following Origen, used the very same expression to indicate the eventual apokatastasis, seen as a spiritual resurrection: ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν ἀποκατάστασις.<sup>695</sup> In *Comm. in Io.* 1,305–306 Cyril interprets Jesus’s return to Jerusalem for the Pentecost in the sense of his eschatological return to the Jews who will finally believe in him and will celebrate in him all of their feasts, just as Origen in *Comm. in Rom.* 4,2–3 and *passim* interpreted Rom 11:11–32 as indicating the eschatological salvation of all Jews besides all pagans. In *Comm. in Io.* 2,156 Cyril, much like Cassian in his *Collationes*, emphasises that Jesus in his mercy heals spiritually even those who were not looking for him. It is not surprising that like Cassian, and like Origen, Cyril was no “Pelagian.”<sup>696</sup>

<sup>693</sup> That is, the power of the devil, of sin.

<sup>694</sup> See my “The *Oikeiōsis* Doctrine in Gregory of Nyssa’s Theology: Reconstructing his Creative Reception of Stoicism,” forthcoming in Leiden, in the Proceedings of the Twelfth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa, Leuven 14–17.IX.2010.

<sup>695</sup> See above in this same chapter the section on Gregory of Nyssa.

<sup>696</sup> On this see G.D.G. Dunn, “Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, and the Pelagian Controversy,” *Augustinian Studies* 37 (2006) 63–88.

In another work, which has only survived in a compendious form,<sup>697</sup> Cyril claimed that offerings and Eucharistic prayers for the dead, who in fact are alive in their souls, are not in vain. "God does not reject the sacrifices offered for the sake of other people." God saves even "thanks to the faith of another person," διὰ τὴν ἑτέρου πίστεως. Cyril therefore exhorts people to pray and make offerings especially during the Eucharistic sacrifice,

thanks to which *all of us* [πάντες ἡμεῖς] have become the object of mercy and *the power of death has fallen* [πέπτωκε] and the hope for *life without end has shone forth* in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Indeed, Cyril insisted a great deal on the universality of Christ's saving work, for instance in his seventh Festal Letter or Paschal Homily (PG 78,551–553).<sup>698</sup> Christ "has appeared on earth really as a human being, to bear on his body *the sins of all of us*, on the wood (of the cross), and to *cancel the condemnation that was written against us*, so to make his own our flesh's weakness and kill pleasure that tyrannises our limbs, and *transform all that which is in us into a better and more stable order*, to conform again our whole nature to virtue, as well as the archetypal image after which it has been created." All of this passes through Christ's "inhumanation": "the flesh in which he dwelt was stronger than death: he suffered and won, and showed that the death of his own flesh is cause and matter of our salvation." For, as Cyril has just said, the death of Christ has been the death of sin for the restoration or apokatasasis of the image of God that is human nature. Christ has "emptied hell completely," living there only the devil.

Cyril too, like Origen and Gregory Nyssen, tends to see the resurrection as apokatastasis, clearly if seen in a spiritual sense. In a fragment from Book 6 of his Commentary on 1 Corinthians he states that human beings "on the occasion of the resurrection will assume again the goods *that they originally had*; for the flesh will revive covered in immortality and enriched by the mantel of the divine glory."<sup>699</sup>

In his exegesis of John 17:23,<sup>700</sup> Cyril declares that St. Paul understood by revelation the aim of Christ's incarnation as universal recapitulation and restoration:

<sup>697</sup> Ed. Pusey, *S. patris nostri*, III, 541–544.

<sup>698</sup> On Cyril's Christology see S.A. McKinion, *Words, Imagery, and the Mystery of Christ* (Leiden, 2000).

<sup>699</sup> Ed. M. Richard, "Le florilège du Cod. Vatopédi 236 sur le corruptible et l'incorruptible," in *Opera minora* 1 (Turnhout, 1976), n° 4, 262.

<sup>700</sup> Cf. *Comm. in Io.* 2,481–482.

As a plan for the fullness of times, to *recapitulate in himself all beings*, in heaven and on earth, and to *unify them in himself, just as they were in the beginning*.

Cyril grounds his discourse in Rom 8:3–4 and Hebr 2:14–15, when he remarks that Christ condemned sin in the flesh and annihilated death, which is to be understood primarily as spiritual death. Humanity had lost “the good given by God,” but the immutable divine Logos became a human being, so that the Good could be immutably preserved in human nature (*Comm. in Io.* 1,693–694). Cyril describes again the eventual apokatastasis as the return of humanity to its original state, or one which is even better: that of incorruptibility, of course to be understood not only as physical, but also as spiritual (*ibid.* 3,80).

### *Synesius of Cyrene, Hypatia's Disciple, and Neoplatonism*

Synesius provides a particularly interesting example of a Christian Neoplatonist who was also a supporter, as it seems, of the doctrine of apokatastasis. He was a disciple of the Neoplatonist Hypatia of Alexandria, who was profoundly venerated by him. He also wrote letters to her. As is clear especially from his *Hymns*, Synesius interpreted the Christian Trinity in the light of the Neoplatonic triad of first principles or hypostases.<sup>701</sup> Moreover, like Marius Victorinus, Synesius too seems to have known—and to have relied on—Porphry's interpretation of the *Chaldaean Oracles*.<sup>702</sup> He finally was elected

<sup>701</sup> See M. DiPasquale Barbanti, “Elementi neoplatonici nella dottrina trinitaria di Sinesio di Cirene,” in *Motivi e forme della poesia cristiana antica* (Rome, 2008), 413–433; on his *Hymns* see at least C. Amande, “Tradizione classica e cristianesimo negli Inni di Sinesio,” *ibid.* 431–442. On Synesius's blending of Neoplatonism and Christianity see I. Tanaseanu-Döbler, *Konversion zur Philosophie in der Spätantike: Kaiser Julian und Synesios von Kyrene* (Stuttgart, 2008). According to her, Synesius “employs the ‘Christian myth’ as an image along with others in order to convey fundamental ideas of Neoplatonism as the predicament of the soul imprisoned in matter or the demiurgic and soteriologic function of divine *nous*” (251). See also A. Louth, “Synesius von Cyrene,” *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 32 (2001), 524–527; T. Schmitt, *Die Bekehrung des Synesios von Kyrene. Politik und Philosophie, Hof und Provinz als Handlungsräume eines Aristokraten bis zu seiner Wahl zum Metropolit von Ptolemais* (München/Leipzig, 2001); *Synesios von Kyrene: Polis, Freundschaft, Jenseitsstrafen. Briefe an und über Johannes*, von K. Luchner–B. Bleckmann–R. Feldmeier–H. Görgemanns–A.M. Ritter–I. Tanaseanu-Döbler (Tübingen, 2010); here particularly relevant is A.M. Ritter, “Altchristliche Eschatologie zwischen Bibel und Platon,” 189–206.

<sup>702</sup> A.J. Bregman, *Synesius of Cyrene. Philosopher-Bishop* (Berkeley, 1982); M. Barbanti, *Filosofia e cultura in Sinesio di Cirene* (Catania, 1994); D.Y. Dimitrov, “Synesius of Cyrene and Christian Neoplatonism,” in *What Happened to the Ancient Library of Alexandria?*, ed. M. El-Abbadi–O. Fathallah (Leiden, 2008).

bishop in 409 CE, and remained a bishop until 415 CE. At the very beginning of his episcopacy, in Letter 105 he wrote to his brother that even as a bishop he would not give up his own philosophical ideas, which were Neoplatonic:

Philosophy is opposed to the beliefs of the populace: I shall certainly not admit that the soul is posterior to the body [...] or that the cosmos is doomed to perish with all of its components [...]. I consider the *resurrection* to be something *mystical* and ineffable. Indeed, I am far from sharing the conceptions of the multitude.

Synesius claims that he will not renounce his Neoplatonic convictions concerning the priority of the soul over the body, the eternity of the cosmos—at least the intelligible one, whose eternity was admitted of by Philo and all Christian Platonists—and the “mystical” concept of the resurrection. The last very probably means that Synesius conceived of the resurrection not as limited to the reconstitution of the body, but as a spiritual resurrection as well, which is typical of Origen's thought.<sup>703</sup> It is Origen himself that in CC 6 presented the discourse of the taking on (with the fall) and off (with the resurrection) of the heavy, mortal body as an ἀπόρρητός τις καὶ μυστικός λόγος, even deeper than Plato's myth of the soul that loses its wings and becomes united to a solid, material body. What allowed Synesius to interpret the resurrection on a twofold plane, physical and spiritual, was the spiritual, allegorical exegesis of Scripture, which was an Origenian heritage and for Synesius paralleled the hermeneutics of Plato's myths,<sup>704</sup> as is manifest from the prologue to his *De insomniis*. And universal spiritual resurrection is tantamount to universal salvation.

Synesius's very notion of the rational beings is close to that of Origen: human souls and good and bad demons can either elevate themselves toward God or fall down toward matter and evil. In his ninth *Anacreontic Ode* Synesius celebrates Christ's descent to hell: there, he “liberated the souls from their sufferings.” In his *Ode to the Saviour* as well, Synesius emphasises the role of Christ's descent to hell: being God, Christ in his tomb purified the earth, the air, and even demons and hell, “the depth beneath depth.” In this way, he made himself a “help to the dead.”

<sup>703</sup> See Ramelli, “Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah.”

<sup>704</sup> A not dissimilar parallel was drawn by Origen. See my “Plato in Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's Conception of the *Arkhē* and the *Telos*,” in *Plato in the Third Sophistic*, ed. R. Fowler (Berlin, 2013).



*Transition to the West:  
The Purported Link between Origen and Pelagianism*

The vicissitudes related to the chasing of the Origenian monks from Alexandria under Cyril's uncle, Theophilus, were not without repercussions in the West. John Chrysostom, who had been exiled after receiving those monks, had been supported against Theophilus by pope Innocentius, and by the ladies of the Anicii, belonging to the Western senatorial aristocracy. Pope Anastasius had different ideas and allegiances, and in a letter to Simplicianus, the bishop of Milan, he condemned Origenism.<sup>705</sup> For this reason he was supported by Jerome (after his turn against Origen), who also liked him for his opposition to Pelagianism, and sought the support of Roman senatorial families in his anti-Pelagian campaign.<sup>706</sup>

Indeed, Jerome, like Augustine and others, considered Pelagianism to be a development of Origenism,<sup>707</sup> especially on the basis of the wrong presupposition that Origen, too, like the Pelagians, denied the so-called original sin. Jerome claimed that the Pelagians, the "new heretics," drew a great deal on Origen and deprecated that both "heresies," the Origenian and the Pelagian, were very well received especially by women (*Ep.* 133). In his *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos* as well, Jerome calls Origen "your teacher," meaning the teacher of the Pelagians, in that he postulated the initial equality of all rational creatures and their different conditions as a result of their free choices. According to Jerome, Origen thought that baptism remitted the sins that had been committed long since in heaven (3,19).

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<sup>705</sup> *Ep.* 95 in Jerome's epistolary corpus, CSEL 56, 157–158. See J. van den Gheyn, "La lettre du pape Anastase I<sup>er</sup> à St Venerius évêque de Milan sur la condamnation d'Origène," *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature Religieuses* 4 (1989) 1–12.

<sup>706</sup> See for instance his letter to Demetrias (*Ep.* 130), on which cf. G.D. Dunn, "Anastasius I and Innocent I: reconsidering the evidence of Jerome," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 30–41.

<sup>707</sup> Jerome began fighting Pelagianism in 414 CE, earlier than Augustine began. Even though he was not a "traducianist," however he did admit the transmission of the "original sin." On Cyril of Alexandria's involvement in the Pelagian controversy see G.D. Dunn, "Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria." On the one side, it seems that Cyril may have been interested in Augustine and in the Pelagian controversy (*Ep.* 4\* in CSEL 88, 26–29; *De gestis Pelagii*). However, on the basis of *Commentarius in Isaiam prophetam*, *De adoratione in spiritu et veritate*, *Glaphyra*, *Commentarii in Ioannem*, *In epistulam ad Romanos*, *De dogmatum solutione*, *De sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate*, *Responsiones ad Tiberium* and *Scholia de incarnatione Unigeniti*, Dunn argues that Cyril's views about original sin, free will, and grace were not influenced by Augustine during the Pelagian controversy. Th.P. Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification. The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans* (Notre Dame, 2008) analyses the reception of Origen by Pelagius and Augustine.

However, a link between Origen and Pelagianism cannot be established, for at least two main reasons. One is that, although the Pelagians, like Origen, denied that some humans were predestined to salvation and others to damnation, nevertheless the doctrine of apokatastasis was not accepted by the Pelagians, such as Rufinus the Syrian, who was the precursor of Pelagianism according to Marius Mercator (*Lib. Subnotationum in Verba Juliani*, ch. 2). This is a major differentiation from Origen. Indeed, Rufinus the Syrian, to whom a *Liber de fide* is ascribed that stems from the beginning of the fifth century,<sup>708</sup> denied the apokatastasis. He seems to have been the first who brought to the West the "Pelagian" idea that the so-called original sin did not pass on from Adam and Eve to their descendants. He argued that the just who populate the Old Testament disprove this. Moreover, if sin were transmitted from the protoplasts to all human beings, this would mean that God either is unjust or is impotent—or at least less powerful than the devil is.<sup>709</sup> He was a companion of Jerome in Bethlehem and in Rome, according to Caelestius (*ap. Aug. De pecc. orig.* 3), claimed that sin is not inherited.

The other reason why Origen cannot definitely be regarded as a precursor of Pelagianism is that Origen, like Augustine after him, maintained that divine Grace is indispensable to salvation. The Pelagians, on the contrary, did not deem Grace necessary to salvation. Pelagius himself, indeed, insisted that Christians can avoid sin after baptism; this notion of *impeccantia* in the Pelagian writings appears as a constitutive gift from God.<sup>710</sup> This is why the Pelagians thought that, given this capacity, sinners, including Christians, will undergo eternal punishment in fire.

Pelagius even expressed very clearly his distance from Origen at the Diospolis synod:<sup>711</sup> there, Pelagius stated that to think that sinners, at least Christian sinners, will be saved is tantamount to being an Origenist (Aug.

<sup>708</sup> On the importance of this book for the reconstruction of the outbreak of the Pelagian controversy in Africa see W. Dunphy, "A Lost Year: Pelagianism in Carthage, 411 A.D." *Augustinianum* 45 (2005) 389–466.

<sup>709</sup> Cf. B. Altaner, "Der *Liber de Fide*: ein Werk des Pelagianers Rufinus des Syrers," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 130 (1950) 432–449; G. Bonner, "Rufinus the Syrian and African Pelagianism," *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970) 30–47; Clark, *Controversy*, 202–203.

<sup>710</sup> On this see M. Annecchino, "La nozione di *impeccantia* negli scritti pelagiani," in *Giuliano d'Eclano e l'Hirpinia Christiana: atti del convegno 4–6 giugno 2003*, ed. A.V. Nazzaro (Naples, 2004), 73–86.

<sup>711</sup> On this synod see S. Pricoco, "Alle origini dell'agostinismo: osservazioni sulla controversia pelagiana dai primi episodi al concilio di Diospoli (411–415)," in *L'adorabile vescovo di Ippona: atti del convegno di Paola (24–25 maggio 2000)*, ed. F.E. Consolino (Soveria Mannelli, 2001), 217–252.

*De gestis Pel.* 3,10). The Pelagian argument was that, if God bestowed Grace upon some people independently of their merits, he would show partiality (Anon. *De induratione* 13; Julian of Aeclanum, *Libellus fidei* 23).<sup>712</sup> Now, this would contradict Rom 2:11, in which Paul declares that God has no partiality,<sup>713</sup> and 1Tim 2:4, with the declaration that God wants all humans to be saved and to reach the knowledge of truth (see Anon. *Indur.* 19). It seems to me, however, that such an objection could be opposed, not to Origen, who extended divine Grace to all rational creatures, but to Augustine and some radical followers of his, who extended it to only a part of humanity, and independently of human desert, in a way that, as I shall show, seemed to some to be dangerously close to predestinationism.

Nevertheless, the Pelagians themselves kept their distance from Origen. The abyss between Origen and Pelagius can be realised very well on the basis of the following document. Pelagius wrote his *Commentary on Romans*, notably full of anti-Manichaeism, before the outbreak of the Pelagian controversy and after the publication of Rufinus's translation of Origen's *Commentary on Romans*.<sup>714</sup> In *Comm. in Rom.* 5,15 Pelagius claims that, if Adam's sin has been transmitted to all humans, even those who were no sinners,<sup>715</sup> one should conclude that Christ's δικαιοσύνη saves all, even those who do not believe. Now, this is something close to what Origen thought on the basis of St. Paul (Rom 5:18–19 and 1 Cor 15:22–23), except for the fact that, according to him, all will come to believe in the end, and this by grace.

<sup>712</sup> For research on Julian see M. Lamberigts, "Recent Research into Pelagianism with Particular Emphasis on the Role of Julian of Aeclanum," *Augustiniana* 52 (2002) 175–198.

<sup>713</sup> See W. Babcock, "Augustine's Interpretation of Romans," *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979) 55–74, *praes.* 67.

<sup>714</sup> See Scheck, *Origen and the History*, Ch. 2.

<sup>715</sup> According to Caelestius's claims at the Council of Carthage in 411 CE, this point had not yet been established dogmatically by the Church (Augustine *De gratia Christi* 2,3,3). Caelestius, condemned by the Council, appealed to the pope, and Zosimus in 417 CE was willing to take his case into consideration again. See E. TeSelle, "Rufinus the Syrian, Caelestius, Pelagius," *Augustinian Studies* 3 (1972) 61–95. According to Julian of Aeclanum, the transmission of sin from Adam to all of his descendants is possible only on the hypothesis of traducianism (each baby's soul is born from the parent's soul just like the baby's body, so that the soul as well is linked to the seed), a theory that he accuses of Manichaeism in *Ad Florum*. According to Julian, what Adam passed on to his descendants is only physical death, not sin. This view seems to have been shared by Rufinus the Syrian and Ambrosiaster. Julian (*ibid.*) accuses Augustine of condemning the little ones to hell before they have the faculty of choosing the good or evil only because someone else, long since, had eaten a fruit. Julian thought that baptising newborn babies made no sense, in that they do not need any remission of sins. John Chrysostom, too, thought that the little ones should be baptised, not because they need to be liberated from sin, but in order to increase their sanctity and to bring them into the "brotherhood of Christ" (Julian, *Libellus fidei* 3,19; 4,10–11).

Pelagianism also arose from the necessity of contrasting Manichaean and astrological determinism, which was still alive in the fourth and fifth centuries. Either one embraced Origen's theodicy, or one had to resolve the problem in an alternative way, which could be that of the Pelagians or that of Augustine. The former excluded the universal effects of the so-called original sin and at the same time ruled out the necessity of God's grace; the latter affirmed both. Whether either of these is more convincing than Origen's solution, this is another story. Historically, at any rate, this is exactly what happened: once Origen's solution had been put aside, the two alternatives arose of Pelagianism or Augustinism. Jerome understood this alternative clearly: in *Dial. c. Pel.* 3,19, he says to his interlocutors, "the Pelagians," that, if they find the doctrine of the propagation of the original sin unfair, they should return to Origen's solution. This clearly indicates that he deemed Origen's theodicy the only valid alternative to the Pelagian system, unless one wanted to embrace Augustine's solution. It is also to be considered that, as Rackett warns, Pelagius's and his followers' ideas, and Jerome's and other opponents of Pelagianism's notion of "Pelagianism," considerably differ from Augustine's construct of "Pelagianism" as a theological heresy.<sup>716</sup>

### *Marius Victorinus*

The Origenist controversy of the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century also spread in the Latin West. Before the culmination of that controversy in the West with Jerome and Rufinus, Origen's ideas, and especially a form of the doctrine of apokatastasis, had already influenced Christian thinkers such as Victorinus and Ambrose.

After a period of interest in Christian Scriptures and works, Marius Victorinus, a Neoplatonist, became a Christian in 355 CE. He knew directly Plotinus (at least parts of the *Enneads*) and Porphyry (at least his exegesis of the *Chaldean Oracles*), and a *Commentary on the Parmenides*, which P. Hadot ascribed to Porphyry, but more recently G. Bechtle attached to pre-Plotinian Platonism, Middle Platonism and Sethian Gnosticism (*Zostrianos*,

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<sup>716</sup> M.R. Rackett, "What's Wrong with Pelagianism? Augustine and Jerome on the Dangers of Pelagius and his Followers," *Augustinian Studies* 33 (2002) 223–237. On Augustine's construct of Pelagianism as a heresy see M. Caltabiano, "Agostino di Ippona e la comunicazione scritta con gli eretici," *Acme* 59 (2006) 55–73.

*Marsanes, The three Steles of Seth, and Allogenes*).<sup>717</sup> Most recently, T. Rasimus too has attached Victorinus to a Sethian Gnostic background, whether or not through Porphyry's mediation (the latter being the more probable alternative).<sup>718</sup> Victorinus is a remarkable example of a Christian Platonist—like Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and Synesius, and to a certain degree Clement, with whom he displays remarkable similarities.<sup>719</sup> He ascribed to the Father most characteristics of the Neoplatonic One and essayed to apply the Neoplatonic triadic schemes (such as *esse, vivere* and *intelligere*, which before being Neoplatonic was Gnostic) to the Trinity. He was a decided anti-"Arian," and in this too he was on the line of Origen, who was a resolute anti-subordinationist.<sup>720</sup> Moreover, in an anti-Arian perspective, Victorinus

<sup>717</sup> On Victorinus's Neoplatonic formation see, e.g., P. Hadot, *Marius Victorinus. Recherches sur sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Paris, 1971); Idem, "Porphyre et Victorinus: questions et hypothèses," *Res Orientales* IX (Bures sur Yvette 1996), 117–125; G. Girgenti, "L'identità di Uno ed Essere nel *Commentario al Parmenide* di Porfirio e la recezione in Vittorino, Boezio e Agostino," *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 86 (1994) 665–688; P. Manchester, "The Noetic Triad in Plotinus, Marius Victorinus, and Augustine," in *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, eds. R. Wallis–J. Bregman (Albany, 1992), 207–222; M. Baltes, *Marius Victorinus: Zur Philosophie in seinen Schriften* (München–Leipzig, 2002). The very notion of truth in Victorinus is Neoplatonic and Christian (God is above human intellectual grasp and truth itself, but God the Son is the Logos and the Truth). See L. Fladerer, "Deus aut Veritas: Beobachtungen zum Wahrheitsbegriff in den Opera Theologica des Marius Victorinus," *Wiener Studien* 117 (2004) 173–199. L. Abramowski, "Audi, ut dico: literarische Beobachtungen und chronologische Erwägungen zu Marius Victorinus und den 'platonisierenden' Nag Hammadi-Traktaten," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 117 (2006) 145–168, highlights both Neoplatonic and Gnostic (especially Barbelo-Gnostic) elements in Victorinus's thought; the latter, however, were not perceived as "Gnostic" or "heretical" by him. Special attention is paid to parallels between Victorinus and the Nag-Hammadi treatise *Zostrianos*. See also Eadem, "Nicänismus und Gnosis im Rom des Bischofs Liberius: der Fall des Marius Victorinus," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 8 (2004) 513–566; C. Tommasi, "L'androgina di Cristo-Logos: Mario Vittorino tra platonismo e gnosi," *Cassiodorus* 4 (1998) 11–46, with special attention to *Adv. Ar.* 1,51 and 64; she hypothesises a direct knowledge of Sethian and Valentinian literature on the part of Victorinus. Now, though, a rereading of Sethianism is in order: T. Rasimus, *Paradise Reconsidered in Gnostic Mythmaking. Rethinking Sethianism in Light of the Ophite Evidence* (Leiden, 2008).

<sup>718</sup> T. Rasimus, "Stoic Ingredients in the Neoplatonic *Being-Life-Mind* Triad: An Original Second-Century Gnostic Innovation?" in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, ed. Id.–T. Engberg-Pedersen–I. Dundenberg (Grand Rapids, MI, 2010), 257–273. The correspondences between Victorinus and Sethian texts are to be found especially in *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII,1) and *Allogenes* (NHC XI,3). Among the Neoplatonists, Iamblichus was the first to give canonical expression to the Being-Life-Mind Triad according to M.J. Edwards, "Being, Life and Mind: A Brief Inquiry," *Syllecta Classica* 8 (1997) 191–205.

<sup>719</sup> For instance, that the generation of the Son expresses God's motherhood: this notion in Victorinus seems to come from Clement's *Quis dives* 37,2. See M. Edwards, "Marius Victorinus and the *Homoousion*," in *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010) 105–118, *praes.* 116.

<sup>720</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism." On Victorinus's influence on Augustine in respect to his Trinitarian thought see N. Cipriani, "La presenza di Mario Vittorino nella riflessione trinitaria di S. Agostino," *Augustinianum* 42 (2002) 261–313.

stressed the consubstantiality of the three divine hypostases,<sup>721</sup> which is exactly what Origen had done before him, emphasising the identity of the divine οὐσία and the individuality of the divine ὑποστάσεις.

It is probable that Victorinus was on the line of Origen also in his pro- tology and eschatology. Of course, it will be only a little later, with Jerome's and Rufinus's translations of Origen's writings, that Origen's thought became available in the Latin West. But Victorinus, who had a good mastery of Greek, did not need to rely on Latin translations of Origen. As for eschatology, two key passages that were susceptible of a universalistic interpretation are 1 Cor 15:28, on the universal submission to Christ and to God, so that God will be "all in all," and Phil 2:10–11: "in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth and in the underworld, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Now, while commenting on 1 Cor 15:28, Victorinus, like Origen, emphasises that, after the eventual eviction of evil, God will be "all," not in some, but precisely "in all":

Evacuatis enim omnibus, requiescit activa potentia, et erit in ipso Deus, secundum quod est esse et secundum quod est quiescere, *in aliis autem omnibus* spiritaliter, secundum suam et potentiam et substantiam. Et hoc est: *ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus*. Non enim omnia in unoquoque, sed omnia *in omnibus*. Manebunt igitur omnia, sed *Deo exsistente in omnibus*, et ideo omnia erit Deus, quod *omnia erunt Deo plena*.<sup>722</sup> (Adv. Ar. 1.39,26–34)

Of course Victorinus—like Eusebius shortly before him<sup>723</sup>—is concerned with explaining that the final presence of God "all in all" does not mean a substantial confusion of creatures and God, so that all creatures will disappear in God (this is why he states: *manebunt omnia*), but it means that all creatures will be full of God, who is the Good, instead of having evil in themselves. This conception perfectly corresponds to Origen's idea of the presence of God "all in all," which was taken over very closely by Gregory of Nyssa, a later contemporary of Victorinus.

In *In Phil.* 2,11 [1211B], Victorinus comments on Phil 2:11, another favourite passage of Origen, along with 1 Cor 15:28, in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis. Victorinus reflects on the eventual submission of all

<sup>721</sup> On which see M. Baltes, *Marius Victorinus: zur Philosophie in seinen theologischen Schriften* (München, 2002), 19–97.

<sup>722</sup> Cf. *ad Phil.* 3,21,45–47: *Ergo ubi dixit potentiae suae, illic intellegitur deus, cui scilicet subdit uniuersa, et propter hoc operatur ut possit etiam uniuersa illi subdere. Quod autem dixit etiam uniuersa, refertur ad id quod ipse illi subditus.*

<sup>723</sup> See above in this same chapter, the section on Eusebius.

creatures, in heaven, on earth and even in hell, to Christ, who created the world and saved it, and has sought salvation and eternity for all:

Cui nomini et in quo nomine Iesu Christi *omnis homo* genua curuat et orat, neque homo tantum, sed *omnia caelestia et omnia terrena et omnia sub terris* quae *in infernis* esse dicuntur. Et item: *omnis lingua et omnis uox* confitetur quod Iesus Christus dominus noster in gloria Patris est et fuit semper. Haec ergo gloria ei data est ut gloria sit ipse Patris, quoniam et Pater eum genuit et ab eo *creatus mundus est et saluatus, et uicta mors est, et salus aeternitasque quaesita est his omnibus*. Qui in ipsum credunt, mortem in Christi morte uicerunt.

It is Christ on whom the salvation of everyone depends. This is true both in Victorinus's view and in Origen's, who has the eventual apokatastasis depend entirely on Christ. This salvation, which depends on Christ, coincides with life eternal, which is again Christ. In *In Gal.* 1148B Victorinus insists again that salvation, which is eternal life, comes exclusively from Christ: *ab ipso solo spem salutis, spem aeternitatis expectent*; and the same is repeated in 1197B: *Per Christum et in Christo plena spes et salutis et aeternitatis et gloriae*.<sup>724</sup> For Christ will bestow eternity upon human flesh. Victorinus does not only refer to the resurrection of the body, which will involve all human beings, but to the eventual submission of all to Christ, which Origen and Nyssen interpreted as salvation. Indeed, for Victorinus, too, the victory of Christ will mean the defeat of enemies that are not sinners, but sins. The final victory of Christ will be a victory over sin, which Paul called "flesh." And the eviction of sin will mean the liberation of rational creatures from evil and their return to God the Father, to whom they will be handed by Christ. Victorinus refers again to 1 Cor 15:28, Origen's favourite Scriptural passage in support of apokatastasis, and also the passage that in the day of Victorinus was commented on by Gregory Nyssen in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, a short work entirely devoted to the doctrine of apokatastasis. This is Victorinus's statement:

Omnia enim fecit Christus ut *consuleret animis, aeternitatem carni etiam daret* et aequiforme corpus nostrum faceret corpori gloriae suae, sed hoc fecit secundum operationem potentiae suae [...]. cum uero *subiecta fuerint illi omnia*, tunc ipse subditus erit ei qui subdidit omnia, ut Deus sit omnia *in omnibus*. *Superatis enim omnibus, quae aut carnalia sunt aut creaturae, et mutatis, subdita uniuersa redduntur potentiae Dei*.

<sup>724</sup> On Victorinus's Commentary on Galatians see Marius Victorinus' *Commentary on Galatians*, introduction, translation, and notes by S.A. Cooper (Oxford, 2005).

Victorinus's interpretation of 1 Cor 15:28 is clearly the same as Origen's: all beings will submit to God, and God will be in all beings, after the complete eviction of evil and the transformation of the creatures' weakness into glory.<sup>725</sup> In *In Eph.* 1240D Victorinus gives a description of the restoration as the Godhead's re-appropriation of what belongs to it, namely all of its creatures, which is very close to Gregory of Nyssa's conception of apokatastasis as the glorious *οἰκειωσις* of God, with which the Godhead will re-appropriate all the creatures that belong to it and were made alien because of evil.<sup>726</sup>

*spiritalis facti resurgimus et Deo per Christum iungimur fitque per omnia plenitudo; quae plenitudo nihil aliud est, quam quod omne, quod eius est, ipsius sit.*

All that which belongs to God must return to God, when Christ will join humanity (made spiritual) to God in the end. But all creatures belong to God. The restoration of all creatures, as opposed to evil, which is no creature of God, is explicitly foreseen by Victorinus in *In Phil.* 1245C:

*Non enim omnia restaurantur in Christo, quae sunt, et ea ipsa quae in caelis sunt et ea quae supra terras sunt, sed in Christo quae sunt; sunt enim et alia atque aliena. Quaecumque ergo in Christo sunt, haec restaurantur et resurgunt, quae in caelis sunt siue in terra. Ipse enim salus, ipse renouatio, ipse aeternitas.*

It is notable that what is declared to remain outside the eventual restoration is expressed by Victorinus in a neutral form: again, this is evil; sins in the plural. For evil is alien to Christ and God, who did not create evil, and sins will certainly not be restored in the end, but they will rather be annihilated altogether. Indeed, all those involved in the resurrection will also be restored, that is, all human beings. Eternal life, who is Christ, is significantly equated with "renovation," which evidently entails liberation from evil and purification. Moreover, the assimilation of resurrection and restoration is an

<sup>725</sup> Cf. glorification in 1266D: *Item aeterna uita et glorificatio et hereditas simul cum eodem Christo; sanctification ibid.* 4,20 [1234C]: *diuitiae quae sunt in Christo Iesu, id est uita aeterna, sanctificatio.* That this comes from Christ is clear from a number of passages, for instance *In Eph.* 1,1 [1236A]: *inde liberationem et promissa et aeternam uitam.* Likewise in 1240D: *Omnis enim ratio aeternitatis nostrae et gloriae et saluationis, et Christus est et in Christo est.* Cf. 1243D: *ipse uero remittit peccata, ipse redimit nos et gratiam Dei commendat ut aeternitatem et sanctitatem immaculati iam habere possimus;* 1246C: *per Christum aeternitas, pariter quae nobis salus est et Dei gloria est, unde laus erit gloriae eius.*

<sup>726</sup> Cf. on the Origenian roots of the Christianisation of this doctrine I. Ramelli, "The Stoic Doctrine of *Oikeiōsis* and its Transformation by Origen," lecture at *The First Canadian Colloquium for Ancient Philosophy*, Edmonton, 3–5 May 2012, forthcoming.



important point of convergence between Victorinus, on the one side, and Origen and Nyssen on the other. This is understandable: if resurrection is a renewal, it will also be able to bring about a restoration. Indeed, Victorinus assimilates the resurrection to the restoration. In *In Phil.* 3,21 [1226B] he explains, following Paul, that at the resurrection our body will be transfigured into a spiritual body, similar to that of Christ:

Quia corpus nostrum humile cum resurgit et immutatur in melius, transfiguravit Iesus Christus humilitatem corporis nostri uel corpus nostrum humile transfiguravit in magnificum. Dat illi scilicet aeternitatem, faciens ipsi indumentum caeleste, ut sit, inquit, aequiforme cum corpore gloriae ipsius. Namque Christus spiritus est, ex quo illi corpus spiritus, et uirtus ipsa spiritus, quae uirtus spiritus gloriae corpus est diuinae et aeternae. [...] nos resurgentes immutabimur et spiritalis effecti fuerimus ...

Basing himself on Paul, Origen also had insisted that the body of the resurrection will be a spiritual body, which Victorinus describes as free from evil and endowed with virtue. The resurrection, which Victorinus also closely connects with apokatastasis, is said by him to be offered by Christ to all souls by means of his own resurrection (1250D): *imaginem per mysterium praebet animis omnibus ad resurrectionem*.

It is noteworthy that Victorinus shared with Origen the protological conception of the preexistence of noetic creatures to the creation of the present world. Indeed, commenting on Eph 1:4, he states, like Origen, that human beings existed in Christ as spiritual or noetic creatures before the *καταβολή* of the present world; God predestined them to sanctification and salvation before the creation of the world (*In Eph.* 1241D: *salutem nostram atque omnem aeternitatem in Christo esse et per Christum animasque nostras et ante mundi constitutionem fuisse quippe cum sua substantia in aeternis semper exstiterint. Has igitur deus ante mundi constitutionem praedestinavit et elegit ut sanctificarentur*). One of these noetic creatures is Christ, who only at a certain point assumed a heavy body with the Incarnation. In this way, Victorinus also comes very close to Origen's teaching on the "soul of Christ" (*ad Cand.* 26),<sup>727</sup> a doctrine that, upheld also by Gregory of Nyssa and Nazianzen and few others, was regarded with suspicion because of alleged similarities with "Nestorianism."<sup>728</sup>

<sup>727</sup> On this see I. Ramelli, "Atticus and Origen on the Soul of God the Creator: From the Pagan to the Christian Side of Middle Platonism," *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* 10 (2011) 13–35.

<sup>728</sup> On this see P.F. Beatrice, "Origen in Nemesius' Treatise *On the Nature of Man*," in *Origiana IX*, eds. G. Heidl–R. Somos (Leuven, 2009), 505–532.

Now, the close similarity between Victorinus's protology and Origen's makes it all the more probable that their respective eschatologies, also, were similar.

This seems to me to be confirmed by Victorinus's theory of the eventual transformation of human souls into spirits, that is, intellects. This coincides with Origen's own conviction; in this way, souls will return to their original nature. Indeed, for both Victorinus and Origen this is an apokatastasis, in that it is a return to the original state for rational creatures:

Animae tamen, quae utique et ipsae inter omnia ui sua ualent, non in eo perseuerant ut exstiterunt atque substantiam sortitae sunt, sed Dei potentia in meliorem substantiam prouehuntur et ex animis cum animae sint, spiritus fiunt. (In Eph. 1,8,10–16)

As is clear from Victorinus's protology, souls were noetic beings, and as is clear from here, they will return to being intellects/spirits. Victorinus sticks to the Origenian tradition.

Another key concept that Victorinus shares with Origen (and with Gregory of Nyssa) is the notion of resurrection, not only as bodily apokatastasis, but also in a spiritual sense. This spiritual interpretation does not exclude the resurrection of the body, just as it does not exclude it for Origen or Nyssen:

Cum intellegit se peccare, *illuminatur*, id est a mortuis *resurgit*, id est tenebras dimittit et contingit Christum, id est lumen accipit et incipit iam et peccata uitare et spem habere aeternae uitae. (1285D)

Regarding the relationship between humans and God, Victorinus distinguishes "being in the image of God" (*iuxta imaginem*) and being "in the likeness of God" (*iuxta similitudinem*). It is remarkable that this distinction is typical of Origen and was not even kept by his faithful follower Gregory of Nyssa. Victorinus keeps it, and expounds it in the following terms: what is in the image of God is the human soul, which is the image of the Logos, who is the image of God: *Ut enim Dei Λόγος imago est, ita et τοῦ Λόγου anima* (Adv. Ar. 3,1,10–11). The human soul is the image of God's Logos in that it is rational: *Iuxta imaginem ergo Dei animam dicimus, rationalem dicentes* (ibid. 1,20,33–34). Unlike the image, the likeness is not a datum, but it must be achieved by means of personal engagement, and it will be achieved, thanks to faith, in the eschatological perfection:

*Aliud* igitur est *iuxta imaginem* esse, quod quidem substantia est, *aliud* autem *iuxta similitudinem* esse, quod non est substantia [...] *iuxta similitudinem perfectionis* in Deo perfectam esse dicimus animam. *Iuxta imaginem ergo nunc et in mundo, iuxta similitudinem autem postea, fide in Deum et in Iesum*

Christum, qualis esset futura *si Adam non peccasset*. In quo igitur *rationalis* est, ad rationem iuxta imaginem est, in quo futura *perfecta* est, secundum similitudinem.<sup>729</sup> (Adv. Ar. 1,20,51–54;58–64)

Victorinus is here expressing exactly the same ideas as Origen, with whose thought I suspect he was probably acquainted, first as a Neoplatonist and then as a Christian Neoplatonist. The circle of Victorinus seems to have been that from which the young Augustine also drew his knowledge of Origen's true thought, which he actively used against the Manichaeans, as I shall argue soon.<sup>730</sup> It is well known, and not accidental, that the account of Victorinus's conversion is preserved exactly by Augustine, who clearly received it from good sources. Victorinus's ironic question in this account, *Parietes faciunt Christianos?*, in reference to the church, seems to me to be perfectly consonant with Origen's idea in *Comm. in Cant.* 3,14,13: *anima autem, quae in ecclesia esse dicitur, non intra aedificia parietum collocata intelligitur, sed intra munimenta fidei et aedificia sapientiae posita celsisque fastigiis caritatis oblecta*. The influence of Origen's exegesis on Victorinus, indeed, has been argued for;<sup>731</sup> however, it was not only Origen's exegesis, but also his philosophy and theology that was probably well known to Victorinus.

Victorinus, moreover, is in agreement with Origen when in 1252B he identifies the Church with the body of Christ, and in turn the body of Christ with the whole of humanity. This double equation is put forward by Gregory Nyssen as well in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, where in turn he draws on Origen. This is Victorinus's version of this double equation:

*Ecclesia omnis, id est omnis anima et saluanda et inde substantiam habens de aeternis [...] omnes animae per Christum [...] omne corpus Christi anima est omnis quam ecclesiam nominant. Plenitudo eius, id est ipsa ecclesia, quae corpus est illius.*

Consistently with this, Victorinus thinks that the body of Christ is the whole of humanity and all the single human beings. The entire humanity, therefore, is crucified with Christ and is resurrected with Christ, an idea that, again, is found in Origen. This is clear in 196D: *Omnis mundus per illum*

<sup>729</sup> It is uncertain whether *Adversus Arium* is one work or a collection of more works, as argued by Hadot, *Victorinus*, 253–280.

<sup>730</sup> See below, Ch. 4, the section on Augustine.

<sup>731</sup> G. Raspanti, "San Girolamo e l'interpretazione di Gal. 2, 11–14," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 49 (2003) 297–321 argues that Origen influenced not only Jerome, but also Victorinus in the understanding of Gal 2:11–14.

*crucifixus est. Sed quoniam catholicum ille corpus ad omnem hominem habuit, omne, quod passus est, catholicum fecit, id est ut omnis caro in illo crucifixa sit.* Soon after drawing his double equation "humanity = body of Christ = Church," in 1255A Victorinus insists on God's mercy, which, through Christ, has brought about salvation for all, by grace, exactly when all were sinners before God:

Cum enim nos *peccatis nostris alienos fecissemus a Deo*, cum essemus ex *superiori mundo*, ille *gratia sua donans peccata*, indulgens etiam delictis, nos sibi redemit per Filium suum, cui cum non pepercit ut nos liberaret, magnae sine dubio sunt eius diuitiae, magna etiam caritas, cum mortui essemus peccatis, redimeret nos per passionem Christi et *saluos faceret*. Quoniam autem *passio Christi mortificatio est peccatorum, resurrectio autem Christi resurrectio est nostra*, ait: *conuiuificauit nos in Christo*, id est *ad uitam aeternam restituit*, sed per Christum, *cuius gratia estis salui facti*.

He repeats again and again that humans have risen in Christ's resurrection, thereby attaining salvation and eternity, for instance in 1256D: *uiam aeternitatis nostrae Christum credere, per eius resurrectionem nos resurrexisse*. By means of his own resurrection, Christ has given resurrection and salvation to human beings; the latter, on their part, must have faith (1259C), which, as I have highlighted, is connected by Victorinus to the attainment of the likeness (*similitudo*) with God:

per resurrectionem assumendo puram atque aeternam carnem atque omne corpus deitatis, cum *omnia spiritus fiant* [...] Iesus Christus istam ipsam quodammodo carnis et mundi pugnam uicit, superauit. Nostrum paene iam nihil est, nisi *solum credere* qui superauit omnia. Haec est enim *plena saluatio: Christum haec uicisse, Christum ideo in cruce sublatum esse, Christum ideo resurrexisse ut nobis in eum credentibus salus, aeternitas et caelorum gloria pararetur*.

Faith is needed on the human part, but Victorinus knows from Paul, whom he cites, that in the end all will have this faith and will overtly profess it. "Every tongue" will proclaim it, in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld. Not only Israel, but all people will participate in the salvation brought about by Christ: *omnes per euangelium promissionis participes in Christo sunt* (1264B).

According to Victorinus, Christ makes possible not only the resurrection of the body, but also the rectification, the liberation from sin: *liberare hominem, donare peccata, in aeterna et caelestia tollere, iustificare et glorificare* (1265D–1266A). Indeed, Christ makes possible the perfection of all the beings that can be saved, both human and angelic: *passio illa Christi et resurrectio et ascensio perfectio est omnium tam in mundo quae saluari*

*possent, quam etiam in aeternis et super omnes caelos* (1274C).<sup>732</sup> All the beings are made perfect and saved by Christ:

omnia ex spiritu uiuentia. Haec autem alio modo se habebant usque in descensionem Christi; quae *omnia*, mysterio gesto, post passionem Christi et ascensionem *salutem acceperunt et perfecta sunt*. Hoc est enim quod subiungit *ut impleret omnia, id est perfecta redderet* et plena, ut nihil minus esset.

(Ibid.)

This declaration is strongly universalistic. At any rate, Victorinus seems to have admitted of the eventual restoration at least of Christians: *In aeternitate autem quod subiunxit, ne praesentis uitae tantum uota sint, sed et futurae, quae est in spe et promissione Christianis*. Origen, followed by Gregory of Nyssa, was of the same idea, but in his view all will become Christian in the end. Victorinus too, as I have mentioned, seems to have admitted that all will proclaim their faith in Christ in the end.

Also, that the stability of the soul in the Good depends on love (ἀγάπη, which Victorinus renders with *caritas*) is a conviction that Victorinus expresses in 1269B<sup>733</sup> and shares with Origen, who even grounded in ἀγάπη the permanence of the souls in a condition of stability in the Good at the final apokatastasis. Moreover, like Origen, Victorinus also underlined that the eventual salvation is a gift from God and depends on God's Grace (*In Gal.* 1189C: *spem habemus et in Dei iustificatione, non ex operibus. Omnis enim uirtus mysterii hoc operata est ut nobis per gratiam et Dei pietatem relaxatio fieret peccatorum et uita aeterna praestaretur, ut saepe docuimus, ex Dei gratia, non ex operibus aut meritis*). He was surely no Pelagian, nor a precursor of Pelagianism, just as Origen himself was not.

### *Ambrose and the Influence of Origen*

Ambrose of Milan (333–397) seems to have been a supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis, at the very least in a form extended to all Christians, if not even—as I suspect and as is suggested by some passages—in a

<sup>732</sup> 1265A: *mortem ipsam interficiant, uitam aeternam dent, in caelis esse faciant, peccata donent omnia? Ergo magnae diuitiae uel in tollendis malis indulgentia peccatorum et in dandis bonis et tantis bonis*; 1278C: *credere in Christum immortalitatem consequi est et uitam aeternam mereri; ipse enim est uita, ipse lux, ipse aeternitas, ipse qui mortem uincit et uicit et nobis uicit per mysterium quod impleuit*.

<sup>733</sup> *Firmitas et firmamentum et totus animae ad aeternitatem status in caritate est, de qua saepe dixi, quae et in deum et in Christum est caritas et circa homines. Haec radicatum efficit fidem nostram et fundatam [...] caritas supra scientiam praeualet et supereminet plusque ad salutem proficit et ad aeternitatem animis.*

universal form (these two options, in Origen's line, are in fact one and the same, since all will come to adhere to Christ in the end, and therefore all will become Christians). Ambrose, who was very well versed in Greek, was also quite knowledgeable about Middle and Neoplatonism and very well acquainted with the allegorical exegesis of Scripture practised by both Philo and Origen. Indeed, along with Eusebius of Vercelli, he demonstrates the diffusion of the knowledge of Origen's exegesis in the West, the first witness to which would seem to have been Novatian, between the third century and the fourth.<sup>734</sup> The next, fundamental stage in the spread of this Western knowledge of Origen will be the translations of his works into Latin by Jerome and, above all, by Rufinus. Origen's influence on Ambrose's exegesis is pervasive, including his use of allegoresis and of passages from all Scripture to clarify a given passage, e.g. his use of Cant to clarify Ps 118<sup>735</sup>—and here his very exegesis of Cant in reference to both the soul and the church seems to me to derive from Origen. Scholars tend to acknowledge Ambrose's exegetical dependence on Origen, although it is also important to remark that Ambrose keeps an originality of his own.<sup>736</sup> An interesting case study is offered by Ambrose's interpretation of Peter's confession of faith in Caesarea, in his *In Luc.* 6,93–100. Ambrose clearly takes up Origen's exegesis very closely, from *Comm. in Matth.* 12,9–14, but at the same time he also modifies it in some respects and often omits details, which do not seem to him to fit well with his own ecclesiology.<sup>737</sup>

<sup>734</sup> So M. Simonetti, "Origene in Occidente prima della controversia," *Augustinianum* 46 (2006) 25–34.

<sup>735</sup> J.B. Kellner, *Der hl. Ambrosius als Erklärer des Alten Testaments* (Regensburg, 1893), 142–145 and *passim*, esp. underlined Ambrose's dependence on Origen in the exegesis of Psalms 36, 37, and 38. See also H. Savon, "Ambroise lecteur d'Origène," in *Nec timeo mori*, eds. L.F. Pizzolato–M. Rizzi (Milan, 1998), 221–234; C. Marksches, "Ambrosius und Origenes: Bemerkungen zur exegetischen Hermeneutik zweier Kirchenväter," in *Origeniana VII*, 545–570; B. Studer, "Das Christusbild des Origenes und des Ambrosius," *ibid.* 571–590; M. Zelzer, "Origenes in der Briefsammlung des Ambrosius," *ibid.* 591–596, on Ambrose's judgement concerning Origen's excellence in the exegesis of the OT: *cum ipse Origenes longe minor sit in novo quam in veteri testamento*. In the OT Origen could apply allegory at its best.

<sup>736</sup> This is underscored by F. Braschi, *L'Explanatio psalmorum XII di Ambrogio: una proposta di lettura unitaria*, 2 vols. (Rome, 2007). He especially shows how there is an organising principle in Ambrose's homilies on the Psalms. See also Idem, "A Comprehensive Reading of Ambrose's *Explanatio psalmorum XII*," in *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010) 137–142.

<sup>737</sup> A. Bastit, "La retractatio de l'exégèse origénienne de Mt 16,13–19 dans l'*Exposition sur Luc* d'Ambroise de Milan," in *Lire et éditer aujourd'hui Ambroise de Milan*, éd. G. Nauroy (Bern–Frankfurt a.M. 2007), 109–124.

As is clear from *Isaac De Anima* 7,61; 8,78–79, Ambrose shared with Origen and Plotinus a fundamental metaphysical tenet that also constituted one of the main presuppositions of the doctrine of apokatastasis: the ontological non-subsistence of evil. His hope for the salvation of at least all Christians is grounded in God's mercy, which, according to him, is granted even after death and even to those who do not deserve it. This mercy entails the liberation from the devil's ambushes, the remission of sins, and salvation in the peace of the Lord.<sup>738</sup> Ambrose much emphasised Christ's death and resurrection *pro nobis* (*In Ps.* 118,8,7; 12,37; 20,19; *De bono mortis* 6,26; *Hom. in Luc.* 2,41) and transmitted to Latin theology the reflection on the *felix culpa* in reference to the fall of the protoplasts—a Biblical event that he recounts with a Virgilian allusion!<sup>739</sup>—, and the notion that the “recreation” of humanity after sin, thanks to Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection, is much more admirable than its creation itself: *mirabiliter condidisti, sed mirabilius reformasti* (*In Ps.* 39,20; 37,58; *Hom. in Luc.* 2,41; *Jac.* 1,6,21). This meditation of Ambrose's seems to me to be largely inspired by Origen's declaration that the resurrection of Christ, with all its restorative consequences, is much more admirable than creation itself, even the creation of the highest realities such as angels: *Ego pro paruitate sensus mei illud aduerto quod multo sit magnificentius in laudibus Dei resuscitasse Iesum Dominum nostrum a mortuis quam fecisse caelum et terram, creasse angelos, et caelestes condidisse uirtutes* (*Comm. in Rom.* 4,7,29–32). Ambrose also took over the metaphor of Christ as a Physician that was so prominent in Origen and Clement of Alexandria. For instance, in *In Luc.* 7,75 Christ is depicted as the Physician who binds up Adam's wounds, that is, humanity's wounds caused by sin. Likewise, just as Origen read in Rom 11 an announcement of the eventual universal apokatastasis, with the salvation of all nations and all of Israel, in the same way Ambrose, who cites Rom 9–11 for 244 times, seems to have been inspired by Origen's exegesis of these chapters.<sup>740</sup> Also, Ambrose proves very close to Origen in his allegorical interpretation of eschatological concepts. For instance, the otherworldly fire, the Bible's πῦρ αἰώνιον, will not

<sup>738</sup> Cf. *De ob. Theod.* 25 and 50, CSEL 73,383–384 and 398; *De ob. Sat.* 1,29 and 80, CSEL 73,225 and 250–251; *De ob. Val.* 72, CSEL 73,363.

<sup>739</sup> In *Par.* 7,35 Ambrose refers to Adam's transgression in terms that echo Orpheus's transgression in Vergil (*Georg.* 4,485–493). See R. Passarella, “*Mortis causa inoboedientia fuit*. Ambrogio e i disobbedienti Adamo e Orfeo,” *Acme* 60 (2007) 401–405.

<sup>740</sup> See A. Begasse de Dhaem, “Israël et les nations: la miséricorde dans l'histoire: l'exégèse ambrosienne de Rm 9–11,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 129 (2007) 235–253.

consist in corporeal flames, but it will rather be one's conscience tormented by the awareness of one's guilt. Analogously, the "external darkness," one of the evangelical designations of hell, is not in the least (*minime*) to be understood as a kind of prison. Likewise, there will be no "worm that does not die," nor "gnashing of teeth," when there are no teeth to grind, and the worm is the allegory of remorse, which unceasingly torments one's conscience. Such eschatological allegorisations will return in Eriugena.<sup>741</sup>

Ambrose's homily on Psalm 118 and his *Tractatus in Lucam* are the works in which he shows the closest dependence on Origen. In the latter, in the first two books of its ten, Ambrose followed Origen very closely. It is usually assumed that Ambrose drew on Origen's homilies on Luke, but it is not to be ruled out that he availed himself of Origen's commentary on this Gospel.<sup>742</sup> Jerome even translated Origen's homilies on Luke in order to denounce Ambrose's "plagiarism,"<sup>743</sup> a charge that was abundantly levelled against Jerome himself and that Jerome levelled against others, such as Rufinus.<sup>744</sup> In his homily on Psalm 118, Ambrose, just like Origen, remarks that all will have to pass through the purifying fire in the next world, even John the Evangelist. And in *Exp. Ps.* 118, 22,3 Ambrose follows Origen's universalistic exegesis of the parable of the lost sheep: "When he found the lost sheep, the shepherd placed it onto his own shoulders. You certainly know the spiritual meaning of how *the exhausted sheep is restored*; for there is no other way in which *the exhausted state can be created anew* but through the mystery of the Passion of the Lord and the blood of Jesus Christ. 'The government will be upon his shoulders' [Isa 9:6], because he bore *all our infirmities* on his cross, that he might *annihilate there all of our sins*."

Indeed, Ambrose, together with Jerome, transmitted Origen's exegesis to the Latin West. Origen's influence was especially strong with respect to the

<sup>741</sup> See below, Ch. 4, the section on Eriugena.

<sup>742</sup> See G. Corsato, *La expositio evangelii secundum Lucam di s. Ambrogio* (Rome, 1993), 177 ff.

<sup>743</sup> This is clear from Jerome's preface to his translation of Origen's *Homilies on Luke*, even though the rhetorical, declared motive for his translation was the request of Paula and Eustochium, the dedicatees of the translation itself.

<sup>744</sup> See below in this same chapter, the section (with subsections) on Jerome and Rufinus. On plagiarism in antiquity and especially late antiquity see at least A. Grafton, *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (London, 1990); Ph. Theisohn, *Plagiat. Eine unoriginelle Literaturgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 2009); also K. Dziatzko, "Autor- und Verlagsrecht im Alterthum," *Rheinisches Museum* 49 (1894) 559–576; E. Stemplinger, *Das Plagiat in der griechischen Literatur* (Hildesheim, 1990 reprint).



exegesis of the Song of Songs.<sup>745</sup> Ambrose played an important role also in the reception of Origen's *Hexapla*.<sup>746</sup> His *De Spiritu Sancto*, too, is influenced by a faithful Origenian such as Didymus the Blind (to the point that, again, Jerome translated Didymus's *De Spiritu Sancto* into Latin in order to make clear the dependence of Ambrose on Didymus—Jerome was not very sympathetic toward Ambrose, as is clear also from the portrait he devotes to him in his *De viris illustribus*<sup>747</sup>). Ambrose inherited Scriptural allegoresis from Origen and Philo, more than Basil, although Basil is his model in the interpretation of the Hexaëmeron. However, like Origen, in his own exegesis of the Hexaëmeron Ambrose allegorised the Genesis account to such an extent as to virtually dissolve the literal level.<sup>748</sup> Philo's exegetical influence on Ambrose here is especially evident in the interpretation of the temptation and fall. For Ambrose takes the serpent as the allegory of pleasure, the woman as that of the senses, and the man as that of the intellect that allows sense-perception to deceive it. And the very garden in which the story is set is not a specific place on earth, but an image of the hegemonic (*principale* in Ambrose's Latin). Moreover, while Basil has no moral allegorisation of animals, Ambrose has quite a great deal, and this also reflects Origen's moral interpretation of animals (for instance, ferocious beasts represent the worst sinners).<sup>749</sup>

Ambrose's works are also rich in clothing metaphors, which often convey soteriological statements.<sup>750</sup> Within this set of metaphors, there are some

<sup>745</sup> See for instance E.A. Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved* (Philadelphia, 1990); in particular Ambrose's reception of Origen's exegesis of Cant 6:11 is studied by M. Cutino, "Note sulla datazione del *De virginitate* di Ambrogio," *Augustinianum* 46 (2006) 95–108.

<sup>746</sup> R. Ceulemans, "The Latin Patristic Reception of the Book of Canticles in the *Hexapla*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 369–389.

<sup>747</sup> VI 124: *Ambrosius, Mediolanensis episcopus, usque in praesentem diem scribit, de quo, quia superest, meum iudicium subtraham, ne in alterutram partem aut adulatio in me reprehendatur, aut veritas*. Which means that, if he had to tell the truth about Ambrose, Jerome would have to speak evil of him.

<sup>748</sup> On Ambrose's interpretation of the creation account see at least L. Gosserez, "Le commencement dans l'*Exameron* d'Ambroise de Milan," in *Commencer et finir. Débuts et fins dans les littératures grecques, latines, et néolatines*, eds. B. Bureau–C. Nicolas (Lyons, 2008), 135–151.

<sup>749</sup> On which see I. Ramelli, "Mansuetudine, grazia e salvezza negli *Acta Philippi*," *Invigilata Lucernis* 29 (2007) 215–228. In ethics, Ambrose interestingly coined a fusion between classical and Christian values, especially in his treatises on the Biblical Patriarchs, as is argued by M.L. Colish, "Classicism and Catechesis in the Patriarch Treatises of Ambrose of Milan," *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 61 (2006) 9–42, who emphasises that Ambrose created a moral code for Christian laypersons, which is rather unusual in Patristics.

<sup>750</sup> F.G. Clancy, "Repairing the Torn Garments of Our Nature: Redemption in St. Ambrose's *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*," in *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010) 143–148.

that clearly point to soteriological universalism. In *In Luc.* 2,69 Christ is said to have taken upon himself all the sins of the world as a horrible garment and to have divested himself of it on the cross. Like a needle, Christ *redintegavit scissa quaedam nostrae vestimenta naturae* (*In Luc.* 8,71).<sup>751</sup> But the most significant statement is found in *In Luc.* 10,117:

How many people Christ has clothed in his garments! Not only the four soldiers [sc. those who took his robe, casting dice on it], I think, but *the whole world*. Yes, Christ *has clothed all*, and in abundance at that.

Ambrose shared Origen's and Nyssen's notion of continuity between the present and future life and the possibility of a spiritual growth also in the future world. He describes it with the image of the *processio mansionum* according to each one's growth and culminating with the vision of God (*In Luc.* 5,61).

Origen's and Nyssen's emphasis on the order in apokatastasis is followed by Ambrose in *Exc. fratr.* 2,116. He also shared with Origen and Nyssen the notion of multiple meanings of "death," of which the death of the soul or death consisting in sin is the worst (*Bon. mort.* 1,3; *Exc. fratr.* 2,35–38), whereas physical death is regarded, not even as an indifferent, but as a positive good, as a liberation, provided by God, from a world that has too much sin in it (*Bon. mort.* 4,15 and *passim*; *Exc. fratr.* 2,47 and *passim*). One of the most significant passages in relation to a doctrine of universal restoration in Ambrose is *De fid.* 5,7: "The mystery of the Incarnation is *the salvation of the whole creation* [...] as it is said elsewhere [sc. by Paul], 'the whole creation shall be liberated from the bondage of corruption' [...] Thus, the Son of Man came to *save that which was lost*, that is to say, *all*, for 'as in Adam all die, so, too, in Christ shall all be made alive.' The subjection of Christ takes place *not in few, but in all* [...] Christ *will be subject to God in us* by means of the obedience of all [...] Once vices have been cast away, and sin has been reduced to submission, all people, in *one spirit and will*, will with *one accord* begin to adhere to God, then *God will be 'all in all.'*"

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<sup>751</sup> Ambrose used many metaphors for the salvific work of Christ, including olfactory metaphors. See F.G. Clancy, "Christ the Scented Apple and the Fragrance of the World's Redemption," in *Salvation According to the Fathers of the Church*, eds. V. Twomey–D. Krausmüller (Dublin, 2010), 70–92, with reference to *Exp. Ps.* 118. He also shows impressive parallels between Ephrem and Ambrose. In the light of the universalistic themes I highlighted in Ephrem's soteriology, one might wonder whether a common influence of Origen could be supposed.

Not accidentally, Ambrose is here relying on 1 Cor 15:28, one of the most important scriptural *testimonia* in favour of the doctrine of apokatastasis in Origen, Eusebius, and Gregory of Nyssa. Ambrose too, like these thinkers, reasoned in terms of the identification between universal submission and universal salvation. Ambrose's very explanation that the subjection of Christ to God in the end will be nothing but the ultimate subjection of all humanity (or rational creatures) to God is exactly the same as Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's; he clearly depends on Origen as well as Nyssen does.<sup>752</sup> Also, the concord and harmony and unity of will that will obtain in the eventual restoration is another trait that is common to Ambrose and Origen and the Origenian tradition. There can be no doubt that in the case of Ambrose too, like in those of Origen, Evagrius, Gregory of Nyssa and other Fathers, the adhesion to the doctrine of apokatastasis does not at all entail a penchant for moral laxity: on the contrary, his ethics, as is clear from his *De officiis*, is much more strict and severe than that advocated by Cicero in his own *De officiis*, and closer to the ancient Stoic rigour.<sup>753</sup>

### *Ambrosiaster*

The anonymous author known by the sobriquet "Ambrosiaster" seems to have been a presbyter in Rome in the early eighties of the fourth century.<sup>754</sup> *Hic* for him meant *in urbe Roma et finibus eius* (*Quaest.* 115,16). In the late seventies or shortly afterwards<sup>755</sup> he wrote a commentary on St. Paul's epistles, which was transmitted under the name of Ambrose or anonymously, and *Quaestiones in Vetus et Novum Testamentum*,<sup>756</sup> which were ascribed to

<sup>752</sup> See Ramelli, "In Illud."

<sup>753</sup> This is nicely shown by J.W. Atkins, "The *officia* of St. Ambrose's *De officiis*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19 (2011) 49–77.

<sup>754</sup> See M. Bévenot, "Ambrosiaster's Thoughts on Christian Priesthood," *Heythrop Journal* 18 (1977) 152–164; S. Lunn-Rockliffe, *Ambrosiaster's Political Theology* (Oxford, 2007), also with broad documentation of the early circulation of Ambrosiaster's writings; D. Hunter, "The Significance of Ambrosiaster," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17,2 (2009) 1–26. A recent attempt at identifying Ambrosiaster with Maximus of Turin was refuted by A. Merkt, "Wer war der Ambrosiaster?" *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 59 (1996) 19–33.

<sup>755</sup> He composed his commentary on Paul under Damasus: *ecclesia* [...] *cuius hodie rector est Damasus* (*In I Tim.* 3,15).

<sup>756</sup> Editions H.J. Vogels, *Ambrosiastri qui dicitur Commentarius in Epistulas Paulinas*, CSEL 81,1–3 (Vienna, 1966–1969) and A. Souter, *Pseudo-Augustini Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti CXXVII*, CSEL 50 (Vienna–Leipzig, 1908). Souter also provided one of the first and few systematic monographs on Ambrosiaster: *A Study of Ambrosiaster* (Cambridge, 1905), and Vogel did the same with *Das Corpus Paulinum des Ambrosiaster* (Bonn, 1957).

Augustine and sometimes to Ambrose. Augustine himself cited Ambrosiaster's exegesis of Gal 2:11 in his Letter 82,24 as Ambrose's (but his exegesis of Rom 5:12 as Hilary's in *C. duas ep. Pelag.* 4,4,7), while Jerome seems to allude to him, but anonymously.<sup>757</sup> His works survive not only under multiple attributions, but also in multiple recensions. They were certainly read not only by Augustine and Jerome, but also by Pelagius; Augustine even seems to have drawn from Ambrosiaster the notion of the so-called original sin as the sin committed by all humans in Adam *quasi in massa*.<sup>758</sup> Despite his astonishing misogyny, and in blatant contradiction with his claim that women are not even in God's image,<sup>759</sup> Ambrosiaster seems to have been a supporter of the apokatastasis doctrine, at least for all Christians, since he makes an exception for unbelievers. He seems, indeed, to have claimed that punishments in the other world will last only for a limited period of time. Commenting on Paul's words on sinners who will be saved through fire, Ambrosiaster remarks (*In I Cor.* CSEL 81/2,37–38):

Paul states that the very person will be saved, because its *substance will not perish in the way in which the false doctrine does*; for the latter *does not belong to the essence of the person*. Paul says "through fire" in order to denote that this salvation does not come without punishment. [...] He *will be saved*, albeit suffering the torments of fire, so that, *purified by fire, he may be saved and not tortured forever by fire like the unbelievers*. Therefore, a benefit can derive from having believed in Christ.

Eschatology is indeed a fundamental theme in Ambrosiaster and appears to be based on Scripture. In his comment on Matt 24, Ambrosiaster repeatedly joins Matthew's text to Paul's eschatological sections and to the Apocalypse of John. Eschatological elements are of course also present in his Commentary on Paul and in his *Quaestiones*.<sup>760</sup> Ambrose and Ambrosiaster, like Jerome and probably also Optatus of Milevis their contemporary,<sup>761</sup> and

<sup>757</sup> In Letter 27 to Marcella, stemming from 384 CE, Jerome seems to allude to Ambrosiaster when he speaks of "donkeys" who criticised his own translation of the NT. Indeed, Ambrosiaster preferred the Old Latin versions, as is clear from *In Rom.* 5,4.

<sup>758</sup> See at least B. Leeming, "Augustine, Ambrosiaster, and the *massa perditionis*," *Gregorianum* 11 (1930) 58–91.

<sup>759</sup> See D. Hunter, "The Paradise of Patriarchy: Ambrosiaster on Women as Not God's Image," *Journal of Theological Studies* 43 (1992) 447–469.

<sup>760</sup> See A. Pollastri, "Escatologia e Scrittura nell'Ambrosiaster," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 17 (2000) 109–132; M. Dulaey, "Rm 9–11: le mystère du plan divin selon l'Ambrosiaster," in *L'exégèse patristique de Romains 9–11*, eds. I. Bochet–M. Fédou (Paris, 2007), 29–46.

<sup>761</sup> Optatus of Milevis wrote *De schismate Donatistarum* under Valentinian and Valens (364–375). He holds that only pagans and heretics will be damned; all Christians, including schismatics, will be saved through purgatory.

unlike Augustine, would seem to envision the eventual apokatastasis at least of all Christians, after periods of purification that can last even very long. Their eschatological position in respect to apokatastasis seems to be somehow intermediate between Origen's universalism and Augustine's later rejection of apokatastasis. Ambrosiaster in particular comes very close to Origen in his fierce polemic against predestinationism and determinism, as is manifest especially from his *Quaestio* 115 on Fate and 127 on the pro-toplasts' sin.<sup>762</sup> Like Origen, Ambrosiaster is quick to explain away Biblical passages that might seem to support predestinationism, turning them to an interpretation that is compatible with human free will. This is probably also why in *Quaestio* 19 and in his Commentary on Romans he limits the effects of Adam's sin to physical death, without admitting of a transmission of sin from generation to generation.

The concept of a restoration and salvation of at least all Christians, interestingly, will reappear in Mediaeval authors such as the Cistercian<sup>763</sup> Isaac de Stella († 1167/69)<sup>764</sup> and Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179). Isaac was influenced by the *corpus Areopagiticum*;<sup>765</sup> his soteriology is closely related to his

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<sup>762</sup> See the edition of M.P. Bussières, *Ambrosiaster Contre les païens (Question sur l'Ancient et le Nouveau Testament 114) et Sur le destin (Question sur l'Ancient et le Nouveau Testament 115)*, Sources Chrétiennes 512 (Paris, 2007).

<sup>763</sup> It is notable that Origen's ideas were well known in the Cistercian milieu, thanks to translations. He influenced the Cistercians Bernard de Clairvaux and Guillaume de Saint Thierry, who have a doctrine of the apokatastasis of the soul due to divine grace. Bernard describes it as the state in which God is *omnia in omnibus* and as the restoration of the divine image in the soul, which was blurred by sin. In Guillaume's view, this image is memory and it is restored in an individual apokatastasis.

<sup>764</sup> He was born in England around 1100, received a good education there and in Paris, and became acquainted with Abelard's work. He entered the abbey of Cîteaux, becoming Cistercian in the day of Bernard's reform. In 1145 he entered the monastery of Stella, near Poitiers, and became its abbot in 1147. According to E. Dietz, "When Exile Is Home," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 41 (2006) 141–165, he was not exiled, as is often maintained, and abode in the island of Ré only shortly. He often speaks of exile, but metaphorically, and the legend of his persecution for his theological thought should be revisited. Isaac wrote theological works and sermons, of which 65 remain. Even in the latter he deals with lofty theological concepts, such as predestination, the mystical body, redemption, and grace. Isaac de l'Étoile, *Sermons*, I, *Sermons* 1–17, eds. A. Hoste–G. Raciti–C. Friedlander–G. Salet, SChr 130 (Paris, 1967); II, *Sermons* 18–39, SChr 207 (Paris, 1974; 2006 reprint); III, *Sermons* 40–55; *Fragments du manuscrit d'Oxford*, SChr 339 (Paris, 1987).

<sup>765</sup> E.g., he uses *symbolica theologia* to indicate the anagogic ascent to God (*Serm.* 22; PL 194,1762CD), displays a dialectic of positive and negative theology, and takes over themes such as the sacred hierarchy and theophany. Cf. W. Meuser, *Die Erkenntnislehre des Isaak von Stella* (Diss. Bottrop i.W., 1934); G.B. Burch, *Early Medieval Philosophy* (New York, 1951), Ch. 5; L. Bouyer, *La spiritualité de Cîteaux* (Paris, 1955), ch. 5; B. McGinn, *The Golden Chain: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Isaac of Stella* (Washington, 1972), 233–234 on the

Christology and his developed theology of the mystical body of Christ. In a homily he insists on the intimate union of Christ and his mystical body, the church, which is formed by all believers, who are liberated by Christ from their sins: "All that Christ found alien from his own nature, he has eliminated and nailed to the cross; he has *eliminated its sins* [sc. of the church] and has destroyed them on the wood. *He has destroyed what was diabolic in it* and has subsumed what was human, and has *bestowed on it what was divine*."<sup>766</sup> Isaac emphasises the purification operated by Christ on his own body, that is, all believers: "Just as he was born without sin, so are we born again in the remission of all our sins. Just as on the cross he carried *the whole mass of all the sins* of his (mystical) body on his physical body, so has he given to his limbs the grace of being born again, that no sin may be imputed to his mystical body." In the same sermon, Isaac insists on salvation and remission of sins in the context of this doctrine of the mystical body.<sup>767</sup> The salvific implications of this doctrine of the mystical body were clear to Gregory Nyssen, especially in *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*, where, however, he ended up with identifying the mystical body with all of humanity. The learned Benedictine nun and abbess Hildegard,<sup>768</sup> who exchanged letters with Bernard de Clairvaux,

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theophany-hierarchy connection and the derivation from Dionysius; I. Calvert, "Symbols of Ascent: Pseudo-Dionysius and Isaac of Stella," *Hallel* 16 (1988) 72–78; Á.J. Cappelletti, *Cuatro filósofos de la alta edad media* (Mérida, Venezuela, 1974); D. Deme, "A Reason to Understand: The Epistemology of Isaac of Stella," *American Benedictine Review* 56 (2005) 286–308.

<sup>766</sup> In another homily whose theme is Christ as the firstborn of many siblings, Isaac states that "the whole body, along with its head, is the Son of the Human Being, the Son of God, and God. This is the explanation of the Lord's following words: 'Father, I want that, just as we are one and the same thing, so they also may be one and the same thing with us.' [...] Those who, thanks to their faith, are spiritual limbs of Christ can truly say that they are what he is: *the Son of God and God ...*"

<sup>767</sup> Christ "is the Saviour and the saved at the same time [...] the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, taking them upon himself. Priest himself, he offers himself as a sacrifice to God, and he himself is God. And therefore, through himself, the Son is reconciled to himself qua God, and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit." A sermon on the parallel between Mary and the church focuses again on the mystical body. Isaac also devoted a sermon to the excellence of love: "The more one longs for God's love and the love of one's neighbour for the love of God, the more one is welcome to God, independently of how much one observes the precepts or the exterior form [...] Whatever is made honestly out of love cannot deserve blame."

<sup>768</sup> She was a mystic, a naturalist, a musician, a theologian, and an exegete, and wrote, among else, *Scivias* (CCM 43–43A, Turnhout 1978), *Liber Vitae Meritorum* (CCM 90, Turnhout, 1995) and *Liber Divinorum Operum* (CCM 92, Turnhout, 1996). See at least B.M. Kienzle, *Hildegard of Bingen and her Gospel Homilies. Speaking New Mysteries* (Turnhout, 2009); also P. Dronke, *Fabula* (Leiden, 1974); Idem, *Donne e cultura nel Medioevo* (Milan, 1986); M.T. Fumagalli–B. Brocchieri, *In un'aria diversa. La sapienza di Ildegarda di Bingen* (Milan,

knew the writings of Ps. Dionysius, perhaps even of Origen, and was inclined toward the doctrine of apokatastasis, at least of the Christians. In *Sciv.* 3,12, the Judgement is followed, to be sure, by Paradise and hell, but in 3,13, Hildegard reports that she heard a voice stating: *Laudes superno Creatori [...] cum Ipse non solum stantes et erectos, sed etiam cadentes et curvatos in supernis sedibus sua gratia collocat.* She addresses vos, *antiqui sancti, praedixistis salvationem exsulum animarum quae immersae fuerant morti [...]* *Gaude filia Sion, quia Deus tibi multos reddit, quos serpens de te abscindere voluit, qui nunc in maiori luce fulgent quam prius illorum causa fuisset.* Hildegard refers to Christ's action of bringing back the sheep that was lost, that is, the lost souls. Even though they are wounded by the devil, Christ the Physician will heal them: *Deus curabit te [...] propter vulnera Christi [...] magnus Medicus.* The soul rejects the devil and converts. Glory is given to God, *quo destruxisti infernalem haustum in publicanis et peccatoribus.* Thus, Hildegard celebrates the final unity, not only of the saints, but also of those who had fallen:

Symphonia non solum in unanimitate exultationis in via rectitudinis fortiter persistentium gaudet, sed etiam in concordia *resuscitationis de via iustitiae lapsorum* et tandem ad veram beatitudinem erectorum exultat, quondam et pastor bonus *ovem quae perierat cum gaudio reportavit* ad gregem [...] incurvationem illorum quos antiquus serpens perdere temptat, quos tamen divina virtus ad societatem beatorum gaudiorum fortiter perducit, proferens in eis illa mysteria quae humanis mentibus ad terram inclinatis sunt incognita [...] virtutibus vitia superantibus [...] dira coacervatio est in vitiis diabolicarum insidiarum, non tamen ita ut virtutes vitia non superent, sed sic quod virtutes ea omnino debilitent et auxilio superni adiutorii ad aeternam retributionem per veram poenitentiam perducant [...] ubi divina gratia operata fuerit, *omnem tenebrositatem obumbrationis aufert.*

Like Evagrius, Hildegard has the contemplation of God's mercy follow that of God's justice, and she ends with the description of the universal praise sung to God. Afterwards, the reintegration and salvation of at least all the baptised was maintained by English and French fourteenth-century vernacular authors, especially Jean de Mandeville, Margery Kempe, and Langland,<sup>769</sup>

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1992); C. Salvatori, *Ildegarda. Badessa, visionaria, esorcista* (Milan, 2004); R. Termolen, *Ildegarda di Bingen, Biografia* (Vatican City, 2001). Literature on her is multiplying.

<sup>769</sup> Cf. N. Watson, "Visions of Inclusion: Universal Salvation and Vernacular Theology in Pre-Reformation England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (1997) 145–187; T. Hill, "Universal Salvation and its Literary Context in *Piers Plowman* B, XVIII 390," *Modern Philology* 69 (1972) 323–325.

the author of an allegorical poem.<sup>770</sup> In *passus* 18 the protagonist mentions Christ's passion and his conflict against death and the powers of hell.<sup>771</sup> In the last part of the poem many references are made to the life and passion of Christ and their salvific value, with frequent allusions to his battle against the devil. Langland emphasises God's love, grace, and mercy; in *passus* 18 Christ, discussing with Lucifer, states that he will have mercy on humanity in the judgement and will not condemn any baptised person to everlasting death. As for the wicked, he can exert mercy on them, so that, by his grace, they may not die because of the evil they committed. No evil will be left unpunished, but punishment will be purifying. Christ will be merciful to a great deal of humans.<sup>772</sup>

### *Rufinus and Jerome in Front of Origen*

#### *a. Jerome in His First Phase*

While Rufinus was a faithful Origenian for the whole of his life, Jerome's relationship to Origen is marked by a sudden volte-face, efficaciously summarised by himself in *Adv. Ruf.* 3,9,8: *eodem fervore quo Origenem ante*

<sup>770</sup> See D. Aers, *Piers Plowman and Christian Allegory* (London, 1975); A. Mairey, "Pratiques de l'allégorie dans la poésie anglaise du XIV<sup>ème</sup> siècle," in *Allégories des poètes, allégories des philosophes: études sur la poétique et l'herméneutique de l'allégorie de l'Antiquité à la Réforme*, eds. G. Dahan–R. Goulet (Paris, 2005), 266–288. Version B of the poem, which exists in at least three recensions, dates to the Seventies of the fourteenth century and expounds eight visions of Will, divided into a prologue and twenty *passus*. Edition of this version by A.V.C. Schmidt, *The Vision of Piers Plowman. Version B* (London, 1978; 1987). The last four visions (*passus* 15–20), reconstruct the history of Christianity. The speaking voice is Soul, who also criticises the ecclesiastical institution, exalting the importance of love. This is also the object of the allegorical vision of the tree of love, whose guardian is Piers Plowman.

<sup>771</sup> A debate between Christ and Lucifer is reported, and one among the four Daughters of God, Mercy and Peace on the one side, Truth and Justice on the other.

<sup>772</sup> *Piers Plowman*, B XVIII 374–396A: "Fendes and fendekynes bifore me shul stande / And be at my bidding wheresoevere be me liketh. / Ac to be merciabie to man thanne, my kynde it asketh, / For we beth bretheren of blood, but noght in baptisme alle. / Ac alle that beth myne hole bretheren, in blood and in baptisme, / Shul noght be dampned to the deeth that is withouten ende [...] And that I am kyng of kynges shal come swich a tyme / There doom to the deeth dampneth alle wikked; / And if lawe wole I loke on hem it lith in my grace / Wheither thei deye or deye noght for that thei diden ille. / Be it any thyng abought, the boldnesse of hir synnes, / I may do mercy thorough rightwisnesse, and alle my wordes trewe / And though Holy Writ wole that I be wroke of hem that diden ille— / *Nullum malum impunitum*— / Thei shul be censed clerliche and clenewasshen of hir synnes / In my prisone Purgatorie, til *Parce* it hote. / And my mercy shal be shewed to manye of my bretheren; / For blood may suffre blood bothe hungry and acale." Watson, *Visions of Inclusion*, 160, referring to this speech, remarks upon Langland's universalism.



*laudavimus, nunc damnatum toto orbe damnemus.*<sup>773</sup> Thus, he himself admits that the main reason for his U-turn was the Origenistic controversy that was spreading again; Jerome himself acknowledges here that he is simply following the general opinion against Origen, without even trying to adduce any rational argument. But initially, and for quite a long time, he was a convinced supporter of Origen—whom he even considered to be the greatest teacher of the church after the apostles—and of his ideas, including the doctrine of apokatastasis. As Rufinus attests in Book 2 of his *Apology against Jerome*, the latter was proud for a very long time of having been a disciple of the faithful Origenian Didymus the Blind, a decided supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis—even if he was with him for only one month. Indeed, in *VI* 109 Jerome is also proud of being the dedicatee of Didymus's commentary on Hosea and the cause—with his request—of the composition of Didymus's Commentary on Zechariah.

In his Commentary on Nahum, for instance, Jerome was very clear in taking over Origen's notion of the therapeutic function of suffering in the other world, and in claiming that all the world and even the devil will be thus healed and, therefore, saved.<sup>774</sup> He was even less reticent than Origen was concerning the salvation of the devil. That the therapeutic work of Christ will lead to universal apokatastasis is accordingly indicated in *Comm. in Eph.* 4,16; PL 26,503:

In *restitutione omnium*, quando corpus totius ecclesiae nunc dispersum atque laceratum, verus medicus Christus Jesus sanaturus advenerit, unusquisque secundum mensuram fidei et cognitionis Filii Dei [...] suum recipiet locum et incipiet id *esse quod fuerat*.

The expression *restitutio omnium* is exactly the rendering of ἀποκατάστασις πάντων, “universal apokatastasis” or “universal restoration.”<sup>775</sup> Jerome admitted of the restoration of the devil, demons, and unbelievers, when “every knee will bow before Christ, in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld,” since the eventual submission of all demons to Christ, at the end of the aeon,

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<sup>773</sup> Ed. P. Lardet, *S. Jérôme, Apologie contre Rufin*, Sources Chrétiennes 303 (Paris, 1983); Idem, *L'Apologie de Jérôme contre Rufin: un commentaire* (Leiden, 1993). On Jerome see at least *Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings and Legacy*, eds. A. Cain–J. Lössl (Farnham, 2009); A. Cain, *The Letters of Jerome. Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority* (Oxford, 2009).

<sup>774</sup> See Y.M. Duval, “Jérôme et Origène avant la querelle origéniste,” *Augustinianum* 24 (1984) 471–494, esp. on Jerome's *In Nahum*.

<sup>775</sup> For the attestations of this expression in the NT, Origen, and his followers see my “Matt 17:11: ‘Elijah Will Come, and All Beings Will Be Restored.’ Philological, Linguistic, Syntactical and Exegetical Arguments for a New Interpretation,” *Maia* 61 (2009) 107–127.

will mean their salvation. Jerome commented on Paul's words—the same on which Origen had focused in particular<sup>776</sup>—“in order to show, in the aeons to come, the superabundant richness of his grace” and maintained that those which now are infernal powers will perform the will of Christ once they have submitted to Christ. Again in his Commentary on Ephesians, Jerome adhered to the apokatastasis doctrine while commenting on Paul's words that “all are called to the same hope.” According to their “deeper meaning,” these words indicated that

At the end of the aeon *all beings must be restored into their original condition*, and all of us will be made into one and the same body, and reformed into the perfect human being. In this way, the Saviour's prayer will be fulfilled in us: “Father, grant that, just as you and I are one and the same thing, so these, too, may be one and the same thing in us.”

On the basis of Jesus's prayer in John 17, Jerome envisages the eventual apokatastasis as a unity, in which all rational creatures will participate after their purification. Like Origen, indeed, Jerome claimed, commenting on Ez 46, that each and everyone will have to be purified by fire before entering the rest of the Lord.<sup>777</sup> Rufinus in *Apol. c. Hieron.* 1 is a valuable source on Jerome's adherence to Origen's thought in his initial phase and for a long time. Rufinus attests that, while now Jerome calls Origen a heretic, earlier he has exalted him for thirty years; Rufinus adds that not even now, after thirty years, has Jerome really changed his mind about Origen (sections 22–23). Rufinus substantiates his claim with quotations from Jerome's Commentaries on Ephesians and on Ecclesiastes, even though these are indicated by Jerome precisely as the works from which his anti-Origenism should have been apparent. Indeed, it is not accidental that the proposal has been advanced to reconstruct Origen's lost Commentary on Ephesians on the basis of that of Jerome, which depended on Origen's Commentary for the exegetical and the eschatological point of view.<sup>778</sup> In this Commentary,

<sup>776</sup> See Tzamalikos, *Origen: Cosmology*, 272 ff.

<sup>777</sup> In *Comm. in Is.* 66,24 (704B) he expresses his confidence that at least in the case of the Christians the sentence of the Judge will be full of mercy: *moderatam arbitramur et mixtam clementiae sententiam iudicis*.

<sup>778</sup> R.A. Layton, “Recovering Origen's Pauline Exegesis,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000) 273–411, indicates the following passages in Jerome's commentary: 1,1,14; 1,2,6; 1,2,7; 2,4,16; 3,5,6. The main motives, I observe, are highlighted by Rufinus. Cf. E.A. Clark, “The Place of Jerome's Commentary on Ephesians in the Origenist Controversy,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1987) 154–171. In general, however, according to Andrew Cain, Jerome's commentaries were something more than simple paraphrases of Origen's own (in *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: the Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad*, eds. J. Lössl–J.W. Watt [Farnham; Burlington, 2011], 108–109).

Jerome embraced Origen's protology, theodicy, philosophy of history, and eschatology. As for protology, he too, like Origen—and like Scripture—explained the creation of this world as a καταβολή (25), and, under the label of “another,” whose view he clearly prefers, he expounded Origen's own view that God does not predestine any rational creature, but it is rather the conduct of each rational creature in the previous aeon that explains their different conditions in the present aeon. The use of the verb “to hope in advance,” “to hope earlier,” implies a previous aeon in which rational creatures lived. As for eschatology, I have already mentioned Jerome's adherence to the doctrine of apokatastasis in this commentary. Moreover, according to Rufinus, Jerome claimed there that women will become men and bodies will become spirits (ibid. 24). This seems to have been meant to conform to the notion that what is inferior or worse will be subsumed into what is best in the *telos*.

Again in his Commentary on Ephesians Jerome taught, in accord with Origen, that human beings can elevate themselves or fall down not only in this aeon, but also in the future (ibid. 26–35). Like Origen, furthermore, Jerome maintained that the church is composed not only by faithful human beings, but by all rational beings, both human and angelic. The very expression “the whole mass of rational creatures,” literally “the whole lump” (ibid. 42), is the same as used by Gregory of Nyssa—on the basis of Origen—especially in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*: ὅλον τὸ φύραμα.<sup>779</sup> Like Origen, Jerome thought that the nature of human and angelic souls is the same. Human beings will recover the angelic status which they lost: Christ has come to make of both one and a single herd (ibid. 36–39). Jerome also embraced the Platonic idea of the body as a prison, which was present in Origen and in Gregory of Nyssa, and the notion that the soul, after the death of the body, returns to its original place.

Indeed, at least 21 passages have been singled out by Clark from Jerome's Commentary on Ephesians and Ecclesiastes—and, I would add, there would be many more—in which Jerome takes over Origen's interpretation and thought.<sup>780</sup> For instance: that human beings will acquire an angelic state and gender differences will be eliminated in the end; that different conditions in this aeon depend on preexistent merits; that the saints have been sent into this world to call the incarnated souls back to their original condition; that all rational creatures will be saved, including the devil, as I have mentioned

<sup>779</sup> See my commentary to *In illud* in *Gregorio di Nissa Sull'anima*.

<sup>780</sup> Clark, *Controversy*, 123–124.

(Jerome *Comm. in Eph.* 1 on Eph 12:27; Rufinus *Apol.* 1,34–37,43–45). In Book 2 of his *Apology against Jerome* Rufinus joins Jerome and Origen's eschatological views, remarking that neither Jerome nor Origen said anything impious or pagan when they professed the doctrine of apokatastasis, that is, if

you claimed that it *becomes the nature of the Trinity*, which is good, simple, and immutable, that every creature, in the end of all, be *restored into the condition in which it had been created at the beginning*, and that this will take place after a *long corrective punishment, even coextensive with the length of all the aeons*, inflicted by God to every creature, not because God is angry, but *with the intention of correcting*. For God is not exaggerated in marking the iniquity, and, since *his purpose as a physician is to heal all human beings*, he will *put an end to their punishment*.

Jerome, too, not unlike Rufinus himself, resumed *in toto* Origen's concept of apokatastasis, based on the healing intention of God as Physician, the limitedness of the aeons, and above all the nature of God the Trinity. The eventual apokatastasis is first of all worthy of the goodness and immutability of God. Jerome, like Athanasius and others, took over Origen's argument that the eventual restoration is the only eschatological scenario that is really "worthy of God," that "becomes God." Indeed, Rufinus is not inaccurate when he remarks that Jerome in his later phase, by condemning Origen and Rufinus as his follower, in fact condemns himself, because his works are literally replete with Origen's ideas (*Ruf. Apol. c. Hier.* 2,27–28).

Still in 390 or 391 CE, Jerome, commenting on the Psalms, accepted the final apokatastasis even of the devil, even more directly than Origen did. He also still received a series of other exegetical solutions of Origen and especially the tenet of the complete disappearance of evil in the eventual restoration. In particular, commenting on Ps 145:9, he stated that no creature will remain outside salvation. In the subsequent commentaries on *Nahum* and *Habakkuk*, Jerome never includes Origen among the heretics of the past, whom he criticises. In the latter he still embraces the end of torments and restoration: *Diligenter considera quid dixerit: "Non afferes fructum in saeculum." Non ait, "usque in saecula saeculorum," sed, cum saeculum istud pertransierit et "intrauerit plenitudo gentium" [Rom 11:25], tunc etiam haec ficus afferet fructus suos, et "omnis Israel saluabitur" (In Hab. 2,3,17).* And in his preface to his translation of Origen's *Homilies on Luke* he still calls Origen *Adamantius noster*, addressing Paula and her ascetic daughter Eustochium,<sup>781</sup> and praises Origen especially for his great commentaries,

<sup>781</sup> On these ladies who supported Jerome see at least A. Cain, "Jerome's *Epitaphium Paulae*: Hagiography, Pilgrimage, and the Cult of Saint Paula," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*

saying that he was asked by Blesilla, a holy woman, to translate Origen's commentaries on Matthew, John, and Luke. Even in the preface to Book 2 of his commentary on Micah, although he begins to report accusations levelled against himself of having drawn on Origen, he still considers him a "blessed" source. Likewise, in his preface to the *Hebraicae Quaestiones* Jerome stated that he did not care about the bad reputation that surrounded Origen at that time.

Indeed, it is significant that for a long time Jerome kept praising Origen overtly.<sup>782</sup> As Rufinus testifies in his preface to his translation of Origen's *Princ.* 1, Jerome, who translated two homilies of Origen's on the Song of Songs, in his own preface to this translation declared that Origen in all of his other works had proved superior to all other authors, and in his commentary on the Song of Songs he proved superior even to himself. Clearly, Jerome's praise of Origen as superior to all other exegetes is remarkable;<sup>783</sup> Jerome in his preface went on to detail the bulk of that work—ten volumes, twenty thousand lines—and its careful method: a commentary not only on the LXX, but also on Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and a fifth Greek version he discovered near Actium, in a place that Eusebius calls Nicopolis (*HE* 6,16,2). In the same passage (*praef.* 2), Rufinus also attests that Jerome translated more than seventy of Origen's homilies, *ultra septuaginta libellos Origenis, quos homileticos appellavit*—among which two on the Song of Songs and others on Isaiah (translated in the 380s<sup>784</sup>), Jeremiah, Ezechiel, and Luke are extant—and some of Origen's commentaries on the writings of the apostle: *aliquantos etiam de tomis in apostolum scriptis*. This means that Rufinus considered Jerome's commentaries on Galatians, Ephesians, Titus, and Philemon to be in fact translations of Origen's own respective

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18 (2010) 105–139; also J. Kelly, *Jerome, His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London, 1975), 91–152. Letter 108 by Jerome (404 CE) is a consolation to Eustochium for the death of her mother Paula, Jerome's patron; it aimed at promoting a cult of Paula with its centre in Bethlehem.

<sup>782</sup> M. Vessey, "Jerome's Origen: The Making of a Christian Literary Persona," in *Studia Patristica* 28 (1993) 135–145. See also Idem, "The Forging of Orthodoxy in Latin Christian Literature: A Case Study," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4 (1996) 495–513.

<sup>783</sup> For further praise of Origen in Jerome before his U-turn see also R. Jakobi, "Argumentieren mit Terenz: die *Praefatio* der *Hebraicae Quaestiones in Genesim*," *Hermes* 134 (2006) 250–255.

<sup>784</sup> Later on Jerome will comment again on Isaiah, but after his turn against Origen. See A. Fürst, "Hieronymus gegen Origenes: der Vision Jesajas im ersten Origenismusstreit," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 53 (2007) 199–233; Id., "Jerome Keeping Silent: Origen and his Exegesis of Isaiah," in *Jerome*, eds. Cain–Lössl, 141–152.

commentaries<sup>785</sup> (indeed, in his preface to his own Commentary on Ephesians Jerome admitted that he had drawn a great deal on the commentaries of both Origen and Didymus, who was a close follower of Origen, but in *VI* 135, in his own literary portrait, Jerome presents as translations from Origen only the Homilies on Jeremiah and Ezechiel<sup>786</sup>). If Jerome in his commentaries appropriated so much of Origen's exegesis, he clearly regarded it as correct. In his exegesis, especially of the prophets, Jerome also took over Origen's rhetorical custom of presenting as "Judaizing" literal readings of Scripture, in particular those pertaining to the future.<sup>787</sup> What is more, Jerome even presented himself as a new Origen, which is perfectly consistent with his taking over Origen's exegesis and thought.<sup>788</sup>

In *VI* 54, written around 392 CE, Jerome, in a long chapter, praises Origen greatly and refers readers to Eusebius's treatment in his *HE* 6, which he abridges here, to Pamphilus's apology, and to Origen's own letters written after the persecution of Decius and going back to the very last period of Origen's life. Jerome offers examples of Origen's "great glory" (*quantae autem gloriae fuerit*): his invitations by Firmilian of Caesarea and by the empress Julia Mamaea, and his letters to the emperor Philip. He praises him for learning Hebrew and compiling the *Hexapla* for the sake of the study of Scripture, and for his extraordinary erudition, which attests to his *immortale ingenium*. Jerome also gave a list of Origen's works in a letter of his to Paula, in which he compared them to Varro's works; he probably based himself on

<sup>785</sup> On the charges of plagiarism exchanged between Jerome and Rufinus see R.A. Layton, "Plagiarism and Lay Patronage of Ascetic Scholarship: Jerome, Ambrose, and Rufinus," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002) 489–522. For the commentary on Galatians see G. Raspanti (ed.), *Gerolamo di Stridone. Commento alla Epistola ai Galati* (Turnhout, 2011), with a study and a translation of the edition from CCL 77A.

<sup>786</sup> *In Ieremiam et in Ezechiel homilias Origenis viginti octo, quas de Graeco in Latinum verti*. But he presents as his own what in fact is the translation of the Homilies on the Song of Songs, the translation of Origen's Homilies on Luke, and all the commentaries: *Homilias in Cantica Canticorum duas [...] in epistolam Pauli ad Galatas Commentariorum libros tres, item in epistolam ad Ephesios libros tres, in epistolam ad Titum librum unum, in epistolam ad Philemonem librum unum, in Ecclesiasten Commentarios, Quaestionum Hebraicarum in Genesim librum unum [...] in Lucam homiliae triginta novem*.

<sup>787</sup> M. Graves, "Judaizing' Christian Interpretations of the Prophets as Seen by Saint Jerome," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 142–156.

<sup>788</sup> See my "The Birth of the Rome–Alexandria Connection"; A.J. Cain, "Origen, Jerome, and the *senatus Pharisaeorum*," *Latomus* 65 (2006) 727–734, who highlights parallels between the persecution of Origen as described in Jerome's *Ep.* 33 and Jerome's own persecution at the hands of his detractors, as described in the preface to his Latin version of Didymus's *De Spiritu Sancto*. Here, and in his Letters to Marcella, Jerome was presenting himself as an *Origenes rediit*.

the list given by Eusebius in his lost biography of Pamphilus. In *Ep.* 33.5 to Paula, stemming from 385 CE, Jerome dubs *rabidi canes* those who claimed that in the Roman synod of Pontianus Origen was condemned for dogmatic reasons. According to Jerome, that “condemnation” was the fruit of mere envy:

Roma ipsa contra hunc cogit senatum, *non propter dogmatum novitatem*, ut nunc adversus eum rabidi canes simulant, sed quia *gloriam eloquentiae eius et scientiae ferre non poterant et illo dicente omnes muti putabantur*.<sup>789</sup>

This of the envy against Origen, his learning, and his eloquence or dialectic vigour (since, when Origen opened his mouth, all the others instantly seemed mute) is the same motive as that which was individuated by Pamphilus in his apology and subsequently by Socrates to explain the hostility by which Origen was immediately and enduringly surrounded. Remarkably, Jerome reserved the very same appellation, *rabidi canes*, for the enemies of Origen and the enemies of Christ (*rabidi adversum Christum canes* in *VI* praef. 7); this is indicative of the esteem in which he held Origen. In *Ep.* 42.1 to Marcella, likewise, Jerome praised Origen as a model and teacher of spiritual life, calling him *vere Adamantius et noster Χαλκέντερος*. Indeed, writing to Marcella, Jerome even reported the testimony of Ambrose, the ex-Valentinian who was “converted” by Origen to “orthodoxy” and provided him with scribes and writing materials; Ambrose attested that Origen always had Scripture read during the meals and before sleeping, so that both prayer and the reading of the Bible continued all the day long. This of Origen as an ascetic is the image that was transmitted by Pamphilus and Eusebius.<sup>790</sup> In another letter to Marcella Jerome highly praised Pamphilus himself, the apologist of Origen. He bought at a very high price the books written by Origen, giving them to the Caesarea library. This had declined under the successors of Pamphilus, but was restored especially by bishop Euzoius, whom Jerome praised in *VI* 113 for his initiative of transferring Origen’s works onto parchment.<sup>791</sup> However, the commentary on Psalm 126 was missing, as well as the treatise on the Hebrew letter Pe. In that letter, Jerome called Origen “such a great man” (*Ruf. Apol. c. Hier.* 1,17–18). In *Ep.* 34 to Marcella—quoted by Rufinus, *Apol. c. Hier.* 2,21—Jerome described Pamphilus’s library, based

<sup>789</sup> Cf. *Rufin. Apol. c. Hier.* 2,19–21.

<sup>790</sup> See Ramelli, “Origen, Patristic Philosophy.”

<sup>791</sup> *Plurimo labore corruptam iam bibliothecam Origenis et Pamphili in membranis instaurare conatus est.*

on Origen's, as an intended emulation of the ancient library of Alexandria, and Origen's works as works of a genius. Pamphilus, whom Jerome praised as *beatus* and *martyr*, in his words, *Demetrium Phalereum et Pisistratum in sacrae bibliothecae studio vellet aequare* and thus collected *imagines ingeniorum quae vera sunt et aeterna monumenta*. Of course, the works collected and copied by Pamphilus were first of all those of Origen. Jerome adhered to Didymus's description of Origen as "teacher of the churches second only to the apostles." Actually, this blatantly eulogistic definition was older than Didymus, being attested already by Pamphilus around 300 CE (*Apol.* 8).<sup>792</sup>

Some years before the completion of his *De viris illustribus* Jerome was also in contact with the most faithful Origenian among the Fathers, Gregory of Nyssa, who even read to him and to Gregory Nazianzen together his books *Contra Eunomium*. Jerome himself makes this known: *Gregorius, Nyssenus episcopus, frater Basilii Caesariensis, ante paucos annos mihi et Gregorio Nazianzeno Contra Eunomium legit libros, qui et multa alia scripsisse et scribere dicitur* (VI 128). What is more, Jerome in VI 117 is proud of having had Gregory Nazianzen as a teacher: *vir eloquentissimus, praeceptor meus, quo scripturas explanante didici*. Indeed, up to 396 CE Jerome did quite nothing to distance himself from Origen, and up to the late 380s he followed and even radicalised Origen, including his eschatology, in his Commentaries on Ephesians and Ecclesiastes. Jerome too rejected Millenarianism, just like Origen, Eusebius, and Nyssen,<sup>793</sup> and he too accepted Revelation as inspired, like Origen, provided that it was interpreted allegorically. Even after his volte-face on Origen, Jerome kept drawing on his work for the use of Hebrew and the Biblical versions, and much more; he intimately retained the awareness of the immense importance of this Christian philosopher, theologian, and exegete. That Origen was the best philosopher and theologian available was indeed a conviction that Jerome never abandoned. Still in 400 CE, in *Ep.* 85, he referred Paulinus to Book 3 of Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* as the best treatment of the issue of free will—and that book was precisely the book in which, starting from his anti-Gnostic polemic in defence of rational creatures' free will, Origen arrived at the formulation of the apokatastasis doctrine.<sup>794</sup>

<sup>792</sup> *Ab aliis dicta eius uel libri pro sermonibus apostolicis uel dictis prophetis habeantur aut quod ille ipse uel prophetis uel apostolis ab aliquo comparetur.*

<sup>793</sup> See *Comm. in Is.* 16,59,14; *Comm. in Dan.* 2,7,17–18.

<sup>794</sup> Demonstration in Ramelli, "La coerenza."



b. *Jerome's U-Turn and the Debate with Rufinus*

Jerome's sudden volte-face marked a radical transformation not only in his relationship with Origen—at least officially—, but also in his relationship with Rufinus.<sup>795</sup> Before that watershed, Jerome and Rufinus were friends, and in Jerome's correspondence a letter is preserved that is addressed to Rufinus and is full of affection. In his *Chronicon*, Jerome still mentioned Rufinus as "a monk of great renown." The very fact that Atarbius—whose mandate is unknown—visited both the Palestinian monasteries of Jerome and Rufinus with inquisitive, anti-Origenian aims, demonstrates that Jerome, too, like Rufinus, was regarded as an Origenian. And he was regarded as such on good grounds. However, Jerome's and Rufinus's reactions to their inquisitive visitor were very different from one another. Jerome, probably sensing a threat, yielded to the request of that visitor and gave the anti-Origenian profession of faith that was solicited. Rufinus, for his part, refused to do so, and pithily affirmed: *Magistros meos nec accuso nec muto* (*ap. Hier. Adv. Ruf.* 3,18). Of course he primarily referred to Origen, and it is not accidental that soon after, returning to the West, he began a systematic program of translations of Origen's works into Latin. Rufinus's intention was to show directly from the evidence of the texts Origen's greatness and orthodoxy against his detractors.<sup>796</sup>

Shortly before Rufinus left for the West, Jerome translated into Latin a letter of Epiphanius that accused John of Jerusalem of Origenism. With this version, and with his *Contra Iohannem*, Jerome provided the West with a simple schema of sclerotised doctrinal charges against Origen. Jerome began composing a treatise against John of Jerusalem, with whom Rufinus had sided when the Origenist controversy broke out in 393 CE.<sup>797</sup> John wrote an apology to Theophilus of Alexandria and pope Siricius, in which he endeavoured to defend himself from the charges of Origenism, and Jerome's *Contra Iohannem* can be regarded as a response to that. Here, Jerome insisted on the alleged errors of Origen denounced by Epiphanius, and indeed Epiphanius, with his letter against John of Jerusalem and *Pan.* 64, is the main inspirer of Jerome's *Contra Iohannem*.<sup>798</sup> Then, in 399 CE, he directly attacked

<sup>795</sup> On their controversy see M. Vessey, "Jerome and Rufinus," in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, eds. F. Young–L. Ayres–A. Louth (Cambridge, 2008), 318–327.

<sup>796</sup> See below in this same section, subsection c.

<sup>797</sup> See M. Kohlbacher, "Vom Enkel des Origenes zum Vater des Chalcedongegner: Einleitungsfragen zum Lehrbekenntnis des Johannes von Jerusalem," in *Origeniana VII*, 655–672.

<sup>798</sup> Though Jerome himself knew Origen better than Epiphanius did, as is remarked by Clark, *Controversy*, 134.

Rufinus in his *Adversus Rufinum*, in *Ep.* 84,10–11; 133,3; in *In Ezech.* 6,18; in *Adv. Pelag.* prol. 2.

Jerome and Rufinus had been reconciled with each other for a short while, but after Rufinus's preface to his translation of Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* they broke up again. In 399CE Jerome wrote a literal translation of Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* with the declared intention of correcting that of Rufinus and denouncing Origen's supposed heterodoxy (*Ep.* 83).<sup>799</sup> In *Ep.* 84 Jerome prudently distanced himself from Origen, declaring that he admired him as an exegete, but not as a thinker (a philosopher-theologian). He blamed those who remarked that Origen was not a "heretic" because he had not been condemned at Nicaea. He depicted Origen's thought as "venomous" and indicated as heretical the doctrines of the so-called preexistence of souls and of subordinationism, ascribing both of them arbitrarily to Origen. What needs to be noticed is that in Jerome's accusations one would fail to find the charge of having supported the eventual restoration of all sinners. Indeed, this is a list of Jerome's accusations:

- the souls' preexistence and fall and the identification of the "skin tunics" with the body tout court (*Ep.* 124,3.9; *C. Io.*);
- the subordination of the Son to the Father (*Ep.* 124,2.13; *C. Io.* 7);
- the succession of aeons and the alleged repetition of the passion of Christ for the demons (*Ep.* 124,5.9.12);
- the allegorical exegesis of the αἰώνιον fire as the torment of the sinner's conscience (*Ep.* 124,7)
- more generally, the allegorical exegesis of the Bible (*C. Io.* 7);
- the transformation of human beings into demons and vice-versa (*Ep.* 124,3.10);
- the alleged denial of the resurrection of the "flesh" and John of Jerusalem's thesis of the disappearance of gender differences in the resurrection (*Ep.* 124,4.5.9.10; *C. Io.*);
- the eventual restoration or apokatastasis of the devil (*Ep.* 124,3; *C. Io.* 7).

<sup>799</sup> For a comparison between Rufinus's translation (398) and Jerome's (399) see G.S. Gasparro, "Aspetti della controversia origeniana," *Augustinianum* 26 (1986) 191–205 = Eadem, *Origene e la tradizione*, 13–26; on Jerome's charges against Origen see Clark, *Controversy*, 121–149; on Rufinus's defence of Origen *ibid.* 159–192; K. Holl, *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen, 1928), 317, 322, 324.

The only accusation that is connected with the doctrine of apokatastasis is the last one, but it is limited to the devil. As I have already pointed out in the case of Epiphanius, Theophilus, etc., no charge was officially levelled against the restoration of human beings.

In his *Apologia*, Jerome denounced the following three doctrines as errors of Origen:

- 1) the origins of the souls (while Origen and Rufinus claimed that this was a matter still open to rational investigation, Jerome did not accept this argument, deeming it an Origenistic mistake);
- 2) the resurrection: Origen and Rufinus were not clear enough that what will be resurrected will be this very flesh that people have on earth;
- 3) the ultimate salvation of the devil: Rufinus declared that the devil will inherit the αἰώνιον fire (in Latin, *ignis aeternus*); since Origen considered this to be a spiritual fire, Jerome feared that it was not regarded by him as an eternal punishment. This would leave the door open to the eventual salvation of the devil.

The restoration that Jerome is criticising here is that of the devil, not that of human beings. In the whole of his *Apologia*, Jerome devoted only three passages to the denunciation of Origen's mistakes: 1,6 and 1,20, on the alleged Trinitarian errors, apokatastasis, the supposed metempsychosis, the alleged infinite succession of aeons, and the alleged necessity of a repetition of Jesus's passion,<sup>800</sup> and 2,12, in which the following assertions are blamed (of course, it is hopefully superfluous to remark that the attribution of most of these theses to Origen has no grounds):

- the Son is a creature;
- there are infinite aeons and there will be a new world that will succeed to this in which the souls will be able to fall again;
- angels become human creatures;
- the soul of Jesus existed before his birth;
- the resurrected body will be aerial and will eventually dissolve;
- there will be a restoration of all, including the devil and the pagans, which will bring everyone to the same condition, against what Jerome argued in his *Contra Iovinianum*.

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<sup>800</sup> Clark, *Controversy*, 143; cf. 179 ff. on Jerome's *Apologia*, which does not solve the issue of theodicy (180). On Jerome's ungrounded accusation against Origen of supporting the doctrine of metempsychosis see M. Maritano, "Girolamo e l'accusa della metempsychosis contro Origene," in *Origeniana VII*, 261–292.

It is interesting to note that the first attack on what was supposed to be Origen's thought, the writing against John of Jerusalem in 393 CE, in fact coincides with Jerome's polemic against Jovinian. The latter, who was condemned by synods in Rome and Milan in 390 CE,<sup>801</sup> maintained that all Christians will have the same reward in the other world—in particular, ascetics and non-ascetics alike—, because baptism eliminates any difference in merits. Jerome—like, and more than, Ambrose and pope Siricius—rebuked Jovinian,<sup>802</sup> and against his thesis he used the same argument as he also used against Origen: it is impossible that, for instance, a *virgo* and a *scortum* have the same reward in the other world. With this, however, Jerome arbitrarily assimilated Origen's eschatological views to those of Jovinian; this was certainly nothing accurate, but it was done for the sake of polemic. From that period on, Jerome, too, was influenced by the charge, levelled against Origen, of despising marriage. Jerome himself, however, for instance in *Contra Helvidium*, showed a rather sarcastic approach to marriage.<sup>803</sup>

Jerome translated Theophilus of Alexandria's festal letter of 401 CE, which was full of accusations against Origen, as well as his festal letter of 402 CE. He sent this translation to Pammachius and Marcella, and in the preface to his letter he referred to the flight of the Origenian monks from Egypt. In 406 CE, in *Ep.* 119, Jerome cites Origen's commentary on 1 Thessalonians in connection with an interpretation of the resurrection, but he feels the need to add that he did not necessarily agree with the exegesis he cites. In the same year, in his Commentary on Hosea, he described the doctrine of the fall of the souls as heretical. In 407 CE, in *Ep.* 120, he declared the doctrine of the so-called preexistence of souls and their fall into bodies to be pagan. In his *Commentary on Daniel* he criticises the eventual restoration of

<sup>801</sup> Or 393 according to D.G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford, 2007).

<sup>802</sup> A critical position in respect to Jovinian's theses will be shared by Augustine, who, however, will keep an intermediate position between the extremes represented by Jerome and Jovinian. See D. Hunter, "Entre Joviniano y Jerónimo: Agustín y la interpretación de 1 Cor 7," *Augustinus* 52 (2007) 107–112.

<sup>803</sup> See E.A. Clark, "Dissuading from Marriage; Jerome and the Asceticization of Satire," in *Satiric Advice on Women and Marriage, from Plautus to Chaucer*, ed. W.S. Smith (Ann Arbor, 2005), Ch. 8. On the preservation of Seneca's *De matrimonio* in Jerome's treatise against Jovinian see my "La tematica de matrimonio nello Stoicismo Romano: alcune osservazioni," *Ilu* 5 (2000) 145–162; the section by Eadem on Seneca's *De matrimonio* in Seneca, ed. G. Reale (Milan, 2001); Eadem, "Transformations of the Household and Marriage Theory between Neo-Stoicism, Middle-Platonism, and Early Christianity," *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 100 (2008) 369–396.

the devil, still insisting on censuring this, rather than that of human beings, and emphasises the necessity of a hierarchy in the other world, according to each one's merits. In 408–409 CE, in his *Commentary on Isaiah* 6–7, Jerome focuses again on the apokatastasis of the sole devil, denying this possibility. In 409–410, in the above-mentioned *Ep.* 124, Jerome lists the alleged errors of Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, mostly resuming accusations that he had already levelled, plus one against the αἰώνιον Gospel cited in Rev 14:6, which Jerome feared was destined to make the present one obsolete, and one against the hypothesis, which he unduly ascribed to Origen, that all rational beings possess the same essence as God. Still at the death of Marcella, in *Ep.* 127, Jerome praised her public attack on Origenism in Rome. And in 411–414 CE in his *Commentary on Ezekiel* he declared Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* to be an “absolutely impious” book and the allegedly Origenian doctrine of the dissolution of the risen body to be heretical.

Jerome's attention was meanwhile turning toward the Pelagians, against whom he also turned his anti-Origenian charges, on the presupposition—whose unfoundedness I have already discussed—that Pelagianism rested on Origen's ideas. In this connection, it seems to me meaningful that still in his *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos* 1,28 Jerome himself extended apokatastasis to all Christians, excluding from it only the devil and the impious. In his *Commentary on Jeremiah*, which was written by Jerome during the culmination of the Pelagian controversy, he criticised again the motif of the fall of the souls and their return. Indeed, that Jerome's own intimate conviction regarding the eventual restoration—a doctrine which he had embraced for many decades—remained unchanged is proved not only by his suggestion to Paulinus to rely on Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* 3, which I have already pointed out, but also by his *Ep.* 55, in which he comments on 1 Cor 15:25–28, which was Origen's—and then Gregory of Nyssa's—favourite Scriptural passage in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis. Jerome's criticism—just as Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's own—focuses exclusively on the subordinationistic interpretation of Paul's words, and does not touch in the least Origen's interpretation (followed by Gregory of Nyssa as well).

Still in 396 CE, in *Ep.* 61 to Vigilantius, Jerome rejected only the so-called preexistence of souls, a notion of the resurrection that now appeared to him too “spiritual,” and the restoration of the devil, but not that of human sinners. Indeed, Jerome's volte-face on Origen is also evident in his conception of the risen body; he passed from a notion of spiritual body, liberated from the division into genders, to the idea of a fleshly body, which will retain all members and characteristics of the present one, even if useless. Likewise, in *Comm. in Matth.* 14,10, on Mt 18:24, Jerome criticises the

restoration of the devil rather than that of humans. What is more, in *Ep.* 62, belonging to the late 390s, Jerome blames those who criticised everything of Origen, and recommended his biblical commentaries. In his own commentaries on Jonah (396 CE) and Matthew (398 CE) Jerome disavowed the doctrine of the restoration of the devil, but not that of sinners; the reason he provides for this disavowal is pedagogical and pastoral (in fact Origen was already very well aware of this issue!): this theory could lead to moral relaxation and to the false assumption that in the other world there will be no difference between virtuous and vicious people. However, Jerome was personally well aware that perfect equality and unity, according to Origen, will be the ultimate reality only after the purification of all sinners, so that it will not be immediately the case that, as Jerome puts it, “virgins and courtesans” will share the same lot after death. Indeed, Jerome, in Book 2 of his own Commentary on Ephesians, on Eph 4:3–4, adhered to Origen’s view that all will finally attain unity with God, but each one—as St. Paul maintained—in his own order, an order depending on one’s merits and spiritual advancement. Jerome kept his distance from Origen also in abandoning Origen’s diacritical signs in Biblical philology.<sup>804</sup>

In two letters in particular, and in his Homilies on the Psalms, it is especially evident that Jerome’s sudden anti-Origenism was a strategic and opportunistic move more than a result of a change of mind of his own regarding Origen’s ideas. In *Ep.* 86 Jerome congratulated Theophilus on chasing the Origenian monks away from Egypt—a not less opportunistic action—and in *Ep.* 88 related his own anti-Origenistic activities. And in his fifty-nine Homilies on the Psalms, stemming from 401/402 CE, Jerome feels the need to interpret anew, and differently, the same Scriptural texts on which he had commented a decade earlier in his *Commentarioli* on the Psalms. In his new exegesis, adapted to his new, displayed anti-Origenism, Jerome criticised again the theories of the “preexistence of souls” and the restoration of the devil. Not even here does Jerome condemn the doctrine of the restoration of human beings. Jerome displayed a similar palinode in his above-mentioned *Apologia adversus Rufinum*, stemming from 401/403 CE. Here, he distanced himself from the Origenian interpretations that he had included in his Commentary on Ephesians and turned against Rufinus the accusations of Origenism that he feared and to which he of course felt liable. His anti-Origenism was clearly for display.

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<sup>804</sup> See V. Capelli, “Segni diacritici ed eredità filologica origeniana in Gerolamo,” *Adamantius* 13 (2007) 82–101.

### c. Rufinus's Program

For eight years Rufinus had been the disciple of a faithful Origenian such as Didymus (Rufin. *Apol.* 2,15) and had also been in contact with another not less faithful Origenian, Evagrius, some of whose works Rufinus also translated into Latin and whose ideas he never criticised.<sup>805</sup> After twenty-five years spent in the East, Rufinus returned to the West and, upon his arrival in Italy, significantly chose to translate Pamphilus's *Apology for Origen* in 397 CE at Pinetum.<sup>806</sup> Of course he chose according to a precise plan, although he says that he was persuaded by Macarius, a Christian who was ignorant of Greek and for whom Rufinus also translated Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν. Rufinus, like Pamphilus one century earlier, intended to defend Origen by means of Origen himself against the distortions of his thought and the related charges levelled against him. Moreover, like Pamphilus, Rufinus himself seems to have had a respectable library.<sup>807</sup> Macarius, according to Rufinus, desired to counter astral determinism, and it is significant in this connection that, like Pamphilus, Rufinus perspicaciously realised that it was precisely against determinism (Gnostic determinism) that Origen elaborated his protology and eschatology (the initial status of the *logika*, their fall, their historical vicissitudes, and their restoration at the end of history), which were the object of so harsh attacks in his day. In *Apol. c. Hier.* 2,12, indeed, he observes that the supporters of apokatastasis with this doctrine intended *Dei iustitiam defendere et respondere contra eos qui vel fato vel casu cuncta moveri dicunt [...]* *Dei iustitiam defendere cupientes*. They had theodicy as their first concern in rebuking determinism and thus claimed that

<sup>805</sup> On Rufinus's life see F.X. Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia* (Washington, 1945).

<sup>806</sup> See M. Simonetti, *L'attività letteraria di Rufino negli anni della controversia origeniana*, in Aa.Vv., *Storia ed esegesi in Rufino di Concordia*, Udine 1992, 89–107; Junod, *Controverses*, 216–220; J. Brochet, *Saint Jérôme et ses ennemis* (Paris, 1905), part 2; M. Villain, “Rufin d'Aquileie: la querelle autour d'Origène,” *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 27 (1937) 5–37; 165–195; F.X. Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia* (Washington, 1945), 59–157; J. Kelly, *Jerome* (New York, 1975), Ch. 18; 20–22; T. Adamik, “Saint Jérôme, Apologie contre Rufin I 18: Origène et le mensonge,” in *Origeniana VIII*, 1213–1218; E. Prinzivalli, “La controversia origeniana di fine IV secolo e la diffusione della conoscenza di Origene in Occidente,” *Augustinianum* 46 (2006) 35–50; C. Chin, “Rufinus of Aquileia and Alexandrian Afterlives: Translation as Origenism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 (2010) 617–647. For a good bibliography, albeit not up to date, see H.R. Drobner, “Tirannio Rufino di Concordia (Aquileia): bibliografia,” *Augustinianum* 40 (2000) 461–517.

<sup>807</sup> Documentation in Chin, “Translation as Origenism,” 621.

*bonae illi et incommutabili ac simplici naturae Trinitatis convenire ut omnem creaturam suam in fine omnium restituat in hoc quod ex initio creata est et, post longa et spatiis saeculorum exaequata supplicia, finem statuatur aliquando poenarum.*<sup>808</sup>

Rufinus's message was that, in order to counter astral and Manichaean determinism, it is necessary to have recourse to Origen. It is not accidental that Augustine in his anti-Manichaean phase, as I shall soon argue, relied precisely on Origen's metaphysics to counter the Manichaeans' claims, and even embraced the doctrine of apokatastasis in this framework. Rufinus also translated the *Dialogue of Adamantius*, undoubtedly as part and parcel of his Origen program, since he explicitly identified the character of Adamantius—the defender of orthodoxy in the *Dialogue*—with Origen, just like the Cappadocians shortly beforehand.<sup>809</sup>

But in his preface he declares that, when faced with Macarius's request, he hesitated, because he was aware that Origen had a bad reputation, even though in the West his works were very scarcely read. Rufinus with this remark was raising the same issue as Pamphilus: many criticised Origen's works without even having read them, being unable to indicate even the passages in which the allegedly wrong doctrines they ascribed to Origen were found. Again like Pamphilus, Rufinus in his preface declared that Origen was "catholic, belonging to the Church, and a defender of the dogma." Rufinus was far from simply having yielded to Macarius's request. He knew that only the direct knowledge of Origen's own works could refute his inaccurate accusers and at the same time show the greatness, and even the necessity, of the Alexandrian's thought. Three apologetic works paved the way for the planned series of translations of Origen's works: in addition to (1) the Latin version of Pamphilus's apology, also the composition of (2) a short treatise *De adulteratione librorum Origenis* (397 CE, to Macarius), in which Rufinus sets forth the thesis that Origen's manuscripts were interpolated by his enemies—what Origen himself denounced already in his life—,<sup>810</sup> and

<sup>808</sup> See Ramelli, "La coerenza," and further "Origen, Patristic Philosophy."

<sup>809</sup> For Rufinus as a defender of orthodoxy see D.H. Williams, "Monarchianism and Photinus of Sirmium as the Persistent Heretical Face of the Fourth Century," *Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006) 187–206, especially with regard to Rufinus, *Symb.* 1 against Photinus. He and his followers in the West prompted the pro-Nicene theologians to define their doctrine in contradistinction.

<sup>810</sup> Junod, "Controverses," 219, rightly thinks that Rufinus was actually convinced that Origen's works were interpolated and was far from using this thesis simply as a polemical argument; P. O'Cleirigh, "Origen's Consistency: An Issue in the Quarrel between Rufinus and Jerome," *ibid.* 225–231, *praes.* 227, deems Rufinus's thesis of the interpolations plausible.



(3) the preface to the translation of Περὶ ἀρχῶν. These works were harshly criticised by Jerome in his letters to friends in Rome. When Rufinus's translation of Pamphilus's apology was published, Jerome claimed that Eusebius was the only author of the apology, and accused Rufinus of ascribing to the holy martyr Pamphilus the work of the "heretic" Eusebius—who was inaccurately accused of "Arianism" or "semi-Arianism"<sup>811</sup>—, by eliminating or rewriting the less orthodox passages. Indeed, in Book 2 of his apology Jerome claimed that it was not Pamphilus who wrote the apology for Origen; Rufinus of course entertained the opposite view, and also observed that, after all, since that apology limited itself to quoting Origen's own works, it was not so crucial to establish the identity of its compiler (Ruf. *Apol. c. Hier.* 2,29–30). Photius, however, who read the whole of Pamphilus's apology in Greek, found no trace of "Arianism" therein. Jerome's accusation, like the rest of his show of anti-Origenism, was a political and opportunistic move.

In *De adulteratione*, which presents itself as a kind of appendix to the translation of Pamphilus's apology, Rufinus observes that the teachings of Origen reported by Pamphilus are perfectly orthodox, while other ideas are found in his manuscripts that contradict his own thought; these are clearly the product of interpolations. A noteworthy example adduced by Rufinus is that Origen described the Son as ὁμοούσιος to the Father—as is clear from a passage preserved by Pamphilus and elsewhere<sup>812</sup>—; if in another passage he is depicted as a creature, the latter is an interpolation by heretics. Rufinus cites the analogous cases of Clement of Rome (to whom Rufinus ascribes the *Recognitiones*, in his view interpolated by Eunomians), Clement of Alexandria (who taught the equality and coeternity of the three Persons of the Trinity, while heretics interpolated in his writings passages in which the Son is presented as a creature), and Dionysius of Alexandria, in whose works also there are "Arian" interpolations. This is why, Rufinus claims, Athanasius felt the need to write an apology for him. What is more, Rufinus—in line with Pamphilus's and his own principle of defending Origen by means of Origen himself—reports the letter of Origen to his friends in Alexandria, in which he lamented the adulteration of his manuscripts and even the composition of works that were then falsely ascribed to him. In that letter, Origen also touched upon the charge, levelled against him already during his earthly life, of supporting the restoration of the devil, while he never maintained that the devil will be saved *qua* devil. Rufinus observes that, if these

<sup>811</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism."

<sup>812</sup> Full documentation in Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism."

interpolations took place while Origen was still in this world and could denounce them, such adulterations took place even more easily after he had passed away. All the more so in that heretics have altered even Acts, the NT letters, and the writings of Hilary and Cyprian. Rufinus finally warns that being malign, speaking evil unjustly, and accusing people falsely is something that comes from the devil (obviously having in mind the etymology διάβολος = calumniator). As a consequence, the methodological approach to Origen's writings that Rufinus suggests in *Adult.* 16 is the following: one should read Origen's works and retain from them what is good and orthodox; what is not has been interpolated by heretics.<sup>813</sup>

In the preface to his translation of Pamphilus's apology, Rufinus foretells that he, with his translation, will magnetise the indignation of those who are offended if one does not think and speak evil of Origen. Programmatically, Rufinus in this preface insists on the importance of research, in the zetetic spirit of Origen. As Origen himself remarked in the introduction to his *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, Rufinus also notes that the apostolic tradition has established the Christian truth concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation, but many other fields—in particular those explored by Origen: protology, eschatology, theodicy—are open to rational investigation. Rufinus in particular defends Origen's doctrine of the resurrection: Origen was relying on St. Paul's *σῶμα πνευματικόν* when he insisted that the resurrected body will be spiritual.

In the Preface to Book 1 of Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, written after the translation of the first two books of Origen's masterpiece and addressed to Macarius, Rufinus explicitly calls Jerome into question. He apologetically states that, in translating Origen's works, he will follow the example of Jerome himself, who, after pope Damasus's invitation, had translated into Latin two homilies on the Song of Songs by Origen. He also promised to translate Origen's relevant commentary. Rufinus also ironically alludes to the fact that many of Jerome's commentaries on Scripture were almost translations of Origen's respective works. Rufinus indeed claims that he will stick to the same method of translation and adaptation of Origen's texts that was followed by Jerome, correcting the interpolated passages that contradicted other passages of Origen, and adding explanations in difficult and too concise passages in these obscure books *De principiis* or *De principatibus*. This,

<sup>813</sup> *Definitum est autem apud nos, si quando eum legimus, probare quae legimus et secundum sancti apostoli commonitionem [1Thess 5:21] tenere quae bona sunt. Si quid autem inuentum fuerit in his quod cum fide catholica non consonat, hoc et ab haereticis suspicamur insertum et tam ab illius sensu quam a nostra fide ducimus alienum.*

“lest the calumniators think that they can find again matter for their false accusations. But you will see what these perverse and litigious men will do!” Indeed, Rufinus admits that he has not prepared his translation in order to reduce evil speakers to silence, but in order to “offer a good instrument to those who want to progress in the knowledge of things.”

In his Preface to Book 3 of Origen’s *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, addressed by Rufinus to Macarius after the completion of the translation of Books 2 and 3, Rufinus observes that what he had feared and expected—i.e., that “some would get indignant, seeing that we were not speaking evil of Origen”—had precisely happened. He further envisages that some

will demand the condemnation of the one [*sc.* Origen] who, with the light of the Gospel lamp, endeavoured to dissipate the diabolic *darkness of ignorance* [...] People prefer to *condemn*, out of *daring and ignorance*, what is difficult and obscure for them, rather than striving to *understand* it with diligent effort.

As Rufinus remarks, indeed, the *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* is a very difficult work—and we may add that for this reason it was explained by Didymus—, in which Origen treated “of God, of the heavenly powers, and of the whole universe, and in which all the impious errors of pagan philosophers and heretics were refuted.” Rufinus, again appreciating Origen’s “zetetic” method like Athanasius,<sup>814</sup> defends what Origen stated concerning rational creatures, of course alluding especially to his doctrine on the origin of the *logika*, their life throughout the aeons, and their eventual restoration. Rufinus observes that this matter is not a subject of Scriptural revelation, and that it was discussed “for the sake of exercise and study.”

Around 400 CE, Rufinus deemed it useful to write an apologetic letter to pope Anastasius, since the Roman friends of Jerome, Marcella and Pammachius, had discredited him before the pope, and in 400 CE he wrote an apology in two books to his friend Apronianus, in Rome, as a response to Jerome’s defaming letter to Pammachius. Rufinus wrote to the pope that he was imprisoned and exiled and professed both his Nicene orthodoxy concerning the Trinity and Christ, and his conviction concerning the resurrected body, which will keep its identity with one’s earthly body, but will be spiritual. He suspended judgement regarding the moment in which the soul is created and infused into the body. Indeed, the church had left the problem of the origin of the souls open; this is not an object of faith, but of reasoning, just like the created beings (*Apol.* 1,15). That Origen’s

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<sup>814</sup> See above in this same chapter, the section on Athanasius.

investigation focused on questions that were not defined by Scripture and the church was clearly affirmed by Origen himself in the preface of his *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* and by Gregory Nazianzen, as I have remarked.<sup>815</sup> Among these objects of rational investigation Rufinus included the restoration of the devil, an "opinion" (ibid. 1,35). He also added that he was not the first translator of Origen into Latin, and that it was not prohibited to translate his works.

Anastasius, in turn, in 401 CE wrote to John of Jerusalem,<sup>816</sup> acknowledging that he knew absolutely nothing of Origen: "I have never known anything about Origen, nor do I try now to learn *quis fuerit et in quae processerit verba*." The same was the case with the detractors of Origen who one century earlier were criticised by Pamphilus. What Anastasius admitted to know is that some people in Rome had read parts of Origen's works and as a result were "enveloped by darkness." This is why Anastasius concluded that Origen aimed at the destruction of the faith, and therefore Rufinus's translation had to be condemned unless its purpose was to denounce Origen (Anast. *Ep.* 1,3–4). Anastasius declared Rufinus separated from any communion with him, and pointed out that even the emperors warned people against reading Origen. Of course the Roman emperors were even less acquainted than Anastasius with Origen's writings, and this would emerge with even more clearness one century later, under Justinian.<sup>817</sup>

In 401<sup>818</sup> Rufinus composed his apology against Jerome in two books, from which I have already drawn some important information on Jerome's former Origenian activity and convictions. Sulpicius Severus in his *Dialogi*, a defence of his own *Vita Martini*, will rework Rufinus's arguments against Jerome, especially concerning his volte-face on Origen, and his excommunication by John of Jerusalem.<sup>819</sup> Rufinus's main argument in his apology is that Jerome now denounced the ideas that he had previously embraced himself. In Book 1 Rufinus identifies himself with one of those who are persecuted unjustly and are the object of Jesus's beatitudes (*Apol. c. Hier.* 1,1). Rufinus protests again, like in his letter to Anastasius, his orthodoxy regarding the Trinity, Christ, the resurrection of the bodies, which will keep the same "flesh," but will be transformed into spiritual and glorious bodies (ibid. 1,4–9); the same insistence is found in his preface to his translation of

<sup>815</sup> See above in this same chapter, the section on Gregory Nazianzen.

<sup>816</sup> This, because Rufinus had been ordained in Jerusalem.

<sup>817</sup> See below, Ch. 4, section on Justinian.

<sup>818</sup> Cf. Clark, *Controversy*, 173 ff. On this apology see also Murphy, *Rufinus*, 143–147.

<sup>819</sup> R.J. Goodrich, "Vir maxime Catholicus: Sulpicius Severus's Use and Abuse of Jerome in the *Dialogi*," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58 (2007) 189–210.

Pamphilus's apology: it is deceptive to make a distinction between "flesh" and "body"; what will be resurrected will be one's body (according to the terminology of Paul) or one's flesh (according to the credal formula), and it will be transformed into a spiritual body, *spiritale corpus*, as Paul reveals. Rufinus also repeats that he was dragged to translating Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* by the request of Macarius (*Apol. c. Hier.* 1,10–11) and that passages in that work had been interpolated. Indeed, Rufinus cites passages from his own prefaces to the translation of Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, especially those containing his methodological guidelines (*ibid.* 1,12–16). Rufinus explains Origen's sentence, "the Son does not see the Father," against any subordinationistic interpretation: the Son is the image of the invisible God, and God is not sense-perceptible. Indeed, what is stated in the Gospels is not that the Son *sees* the Father, but that he *knows* the Father (*ibid.* 1,17–18).

Rufinus denounces the interpolations of Eusebius of Cremona in his own work (*ibid.* 1, 19–20) and protests that his own method in the translation of Origen is the same as was adopted by Jerome for a long time. Jerome cannot criticise Rufinus for following his own example (*ibid.* 1,21). Rufinus interestingly lists some venerable Fathers who agreed with Origen: Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, Didymus, and Jerome himself for a long time, so that, if Origen and Rufinus deserve to be condemned, so does Jerome as well (*ibid.* 1,40–44). Indeed, in the present monograph I have showed that all of these authors supported the doctrine of apokatastasis.

In Book 2 of his *Apologia contra Hieronymum* Rufinus declares that he is completely extraneous to the secret society of the Origenists of which Jerome speaks and to which he alluded in his Commentary on Ephesians (*Apol. c. Hier.* 2,1–4). Jerome's treatise on virginity, which coincides with *Ep.* 22 to Eustochium, is a denigration of all orders of Christians, from the virgins to the widows, from the presbyters to the deacons. Rufinus also criticises Jerome because, after promising never to read again "pagan" books, as a result of his famous dream in which Jesus reproached him for being more of a Ciceronian than of a Christian, in his works he has continued to cite pagan literature and has taught grammar and literature based on pagan authors.<sup>820</sup> While Jerome condemned as heretical opinions that he himself

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<sup>820</sup> In *In Tit.* 1,12 and *Ep.* 70,2 Jerome precisely addresses the question whether a Christian should cite "pagan" authors. M. Mülke, "Hieronymus und Johannes Chrysostomos," *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012) 93–102 has demonstrated that in these passages John Chrysostom was the direct source of Jerome.

had supported, there was no need to condemn either Origen or himself because they used philosophical arguments in order to demonstrate, for instance, the existence of divine Providence. Rufinus also accuses Jerome of having translated much of Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* in his own commentaries, as well as of having preferred the "Jewish authority" to that of the apostles (sc. the LXX, which Origen too deemed inspired) in his translation of the OT (*Apol. c. Hier.* 2,31–35).<sup>821</sup> In his *Contra Iovinianum* Jerome expounded the same ideas as he blames in Origen. Indeed, Rufinus accuses Jerome again and again of having taken all of his exegesis from Origen, and acquiring a great fame as an exegete thanks to Origen (39–40). Jerome has expressed the very same ideas as Origen on the origin of rational creatures, their sojourn in heavy bodies, and their eventual restoration, including that of the demons, as well as the notion of the church as encompassing the whole of humanity and the angels; moreover, in all of his prefaces to his Biblical commentaries he has loftily exalted Origen (41–43; 47).<sup>822</sup>

Rufinus, who had a definite intention at the beginning of his translation campaign, kept it until the end of his earthly life, in spite of any accusations and intimidations, and consequently went on to translate Origen's works tirelessly, until he passed away in 410 CE or at the beginning of 411 CE.<sup>823</sup> Thus, for instance, for Apronianus he translated Origen's homilies on Psalms 36, 37 and 38,<sup>824</sup> and composed the preface to this translation between 398 and 407 CE, as it seems in Rome or Aquileia. Here Rufinus highlights the ethical character of these Psalms, which are an invitation to purification and

<sup>821</sup> Cf. M.H. Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago, 2006); C.M. Chin, "Through the Looking Glass Darkly: Jerome Inside the Book," in *The Early Christian Book*, eds. W.E. Klingshirn, L. Safran (Washington, 2007), 101–116; Chin, "Translation as Origenism," 644; F. Pieri, "Il problema dei *testimonia* profetici nella critica di Gerolamo alla LXX," *Adamantius* 13 (2007) 126–143, on Jerome's argument for the superiority of the Hebrew text of the Bible over the Septuagint, based on the *testimonia*, OT quotations in the NT, interpreted typologically. See also A. Canellis, "Le livre III de l'*In Zachariam* de saint Jérôme et la tradition alexandrine," *Adamantius* 13 (2007) 66–81, on Jerome's preference for the Hebrew text over the Septuagint in his commentary on Zachariah; R. Courtray, "Jérôme, traducteur du *Livre de Daniel*," *Pallas* 75 (2007) 105–124 on Jerome's Latin translation of the complex book of Daniel in 390–392 CE.

<sup>822</sup> Rufinus exhorts Pammachius—the addressee of Jerome's defaming letter—to judge with justice, because in those who are judged unjustly the Lord himself is judged. Rufinus also asks why his own translation of Origen should be so offensive, and those of Jerome should not (44–46).

<sup>823</sup> On the chronology of Rufinus's late translations see C.P. Hammond, "The Last Ten Years of Rufinus's Life," *Journal of Theological Studies* 28 (1977) 372–429, *praes.* 428–429.

<sup>824</sup> On Rufinus's translation of Origen's homilies vis-à-vis the Greek: A. Grappone, *Omellie origeniane nella traduzione di Rufino* (Rome, 2007).

moral progress, and wants man and women to be able to read Origen's exegesis of these texts. But why did Rufinus choose exactly these Psalms? I do not deem it accidental in the least that in these homilies Origen insisted so much on the gravity of sins such as corruption, iniquity, envy, calumny, and slander. He was one of the most illustrious victims of these sins, and Rufinus's apologetical aim was to denounce precisely this. This is clear right from the beginning, from Rufinus's preface to these Psalms, where he sharply denounces envy and corruption: *hoc est ergo quod nos edocet psalmus: [...] genus hominum proclive est ad zelotypiam et perfacile ad vitium istud inclinatur* (*praef.* 1).<sup>825</sup> Soon after, he denounces as foolishness, *insania*, the behaviour of those many who attain positions they do not deserve (*immerita*) through corruption and injustice toward others (*per diversa flagitia vel indignas atque illicitas ambitiones*, *ibid.*). Origen himself in these homilies sharply blames those who obtain richness and/or undeserved positions by means of corruption or even violence,<sup>826</sup> and denounces envy and hatred against spiritually gifted people.<sup>827</sup> The latter are the object of calumny as a consequence of envy, and calumny is inspired by the devil (διάβολος), but Origen warns that false attacks will turn against those who utter them,<sup>828</sup> and that it is dangerous to speak against the righteous, since it means to speak against the Lord.<sup>829</sup> Envy is the root, not only of the devil's first deception of humanity, but also of the first murder, that of Cain.<sup>830</sup> Envy, calumny, hostility, and corruption are prominent in Origen's list of the worst vices, those which make people "odious to God."<sup>831</sup> Origen realises that spiritually gifted

<sup>825</sup> I use the edition by E. Prinzivalli, *Origene: Omelie sui Salmi* (Florence, 1991). As ever in the present monograph, the Latin script style (e.g. the use of *u* or *v* etc.) conforms to the critical edition I use.

<sup>826</sup> *Hom. 2 in Ps. 38, 9: qui divitias variis artibus et callidis adinventionibus congregabant, qui magistratus, qui honores, qui consulatus diversa vel ambitione vel crudelitate quaerebant.*

<sup>827</sup> *Hom. 3 in Ps. 36, 3: Perpauci sunt tales [sc. people who despise worldly things and look for spiritual goods] et ipsi, si qui sunt, pauci, per invidiam et livorem ita agitur ne omnino vel pauci sint, ne vel prodesse aliquibus possint.*

<sup>828</sup> *Hom. 3 in Ps. 36, 5: Sermones igitur isti, quos inspirante diabolo iniqui et peccatores proferunt adversus iustum [...] convertentur adversus ipsos qui eos proferunt et illuc redeant unde processerant.*

<sup>829</sup> *Hom. 3 in Ps. 36, 12: Qui maledicunt iustum [sic] exterminabuntur [...] Videtis quanti periculi sit inimicari iustis vel male loqui de sanctis. [...] Maledicentes uni ex istis, mihi [sc. the Lord] maledixistis.*

<sup>830</sup> *Hom. 4 in Ps. 36, 1: digredere falsa testimonia [...] digredere invidiam, per quam primum terra humanum sanguinem bibit.*

<sup>831</sup> *Hom. 4 in Ps. 36, 3: repletos omni iniquitate, nequitia, avaritia, plenos invidia, homicidiis, contentione, dolo, susurratores, detractores, Deo odibiles, contumeliosos ... Cf. Hom. 2 in Ps. 38, 2: dolus, superbia, tumor, gloriae saeculares, invidiae ...*

people, who are just and do not attain richness and honours by means of corruption, are despised and humiliated by humans—since corruption is such that innocence and justice are considered to be stupidity<sup>832</sup>—, but they will be exalted by God.<sup>833</sup> He describes injustice, corruption, and falsity as the most serious sins, which go against Christ as Justice and Christ as Truth<sup>834</sup> (and this not only in these specific homilies, but in others as well<sup>835</sup>). Envy, hostility, and calumny against those who are better than one is are repeatedly denounced by Origen.<sup>836</sup> Very well reminiscent of Origen's case and his reflections, Evagrius not accidentally would repeatedly highlight the gravity of sins such as slander and malignity in his works aimed at the spiritual formation of monks.<sup>837</sup> He observes that corrupt people seem to prosper in this

<sup>832</sup> *Hom. 4 in Ps. 36, 6: In tantum corruptela morum proficit in hominibus ut apud quamplurimos innocentia pro stultitia iudicetur.* The righteous, who are spoken evil of and do not reply, are even considered by people to be sheep and trash: *videntur hominibus velut pecudes et purgamenta (Hom. 1 in Ps. 38, 4).*

<sup>833</sup> *Hom. 3 in Ps. 36, 10: contempti fuerint et despecti et ab hominibus humiliati, a Deo exaltabuntur et erigentur.*

<sup>834</sup> *Hom. 2 in Ps. 36, 1: Dominus noster Iesus Christus Iustitia est. Nemo ergo iniuste agens subiectus est Christo, qui est Iustitia. Christus Veritas est. Nemo mendax Christo subiectus est, qui est Veritas.* Likewise in *Hom. 3 in Ps. 36, 7* Origen mentions in the first place the rejection of falsity (*mendacium*) and the adhesion to justice (*iustitia*), describing Christ as the *sol iustitiae* of the other world (cf. *Hom. 1 in Ps. 38, 8*). Origen, who identifies Christ with all virtues, especially characterises him as Justice, with a special insistence. *Hom. 2 in Ps. 38, 2: Christus est natura virtutum: ipse enim Iustitia.*

<sup>835</sup> E.g., *Hom. in Iud. 3,1* against corruption: *ad potestates atque ad dignitates saeculi prosilit et artes quibus haec assequi nititur, etiamsi contra fidem et religionem sint, non refugit nec horrescit, dummodo quod cupit obtineat, inde evenit ut faciat malignum in conspectu Domini; ibid. 6,5* against iniquity: *aut per iustitiam superamus, aut per iniustitiam vincimur.*

<sup>836</sup> E.g., *Hom. 2 in Ps. 37, 1–2: gratulantur cum audierint mala et velut insultant cum in malis aliquibus viderint iustum [...] iusto quaerunt mala [...] vide insidiatorem iusti [...] maledicos atque obtrectatores male loqui, carpere, detrahare, incusare [...] cum maledicimur a fratribus, cum detrahunt de nobis, cum etiam in faciem probris et conviciis lacessimur. 8: impossibile est in hac vita positum odio non haberi. [...] Odio habiti sunt prophetae, sed iniuste; odio habitus est Christus, sed gratis. Hom. 1 in Ps. 38, 4: peccator astitit adversum me et loquebatur de me male et obtrebat (cf. Hom. 1 in Ps. 38, 6: male loquentis et detrahentis vocem). Hom. 2 in Ps. 38, 6: cum adversum nos vel derogationum vel conviciorum vel probrorum tela iaciuntur.*

<sup>837</sup> E.g. *Eul. 16: "Block your ears from hearing malicious talk lest you commit a twofold transgression against the law with them: namely, accustoming yourself to a terrible passion and not stopping them from prattling their gossip [...] Others, exalted by jealousy, throw pretexts from on high and disparage to their fellows those who are stable in virtues"; 17: "When your friend is made to feel inferior because of the praises you receive for your ascetic labours and is diverted into jealousy to the point of hurling words motivated by vainglory at your ascetic labours, even before those about him, that with jests at your expense he may obscure the esteem circulating in your regard, then do not get stung by paying attention to his envy, lest you draw a bitter venom into your soul. For it is the work of Satan to inflame him with jealousy*



life, but he warns that it is impossible to have material goods in this world and spiritual goods in the next; in order to have spiritual goods in the next, one must choose spiritual goods in this world, which will not bring about material goods.<sup>838</sup> Everything must be acquired without corruption.<sup>839</sup> Origen is clearly speaking from his own experience when he says that many *imperiti*, who take pride in what they call their “simplicity,” defame those who apply themselves to the study of Scripture and teaching (*eos qui verbo et doctrinae operam dederint*): *amplectuntur magis imperitiam suam quam illorum studia ac laborem* (*Hom. 5 in Ps. 36,1*).

In 399 CE Rufinus translated the sermons of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, which clearly confirms that he felt a strong connection between them and Origen. One codex of his version of Nazianzen belonged to the Origenian dame Melania (Junior or Senior).<sup>840</sup> In that very year, pope Siricius died, who had refused to proceed against the Origenians, had accepted Rufinus’s profession of faith, and had given him a document which attested that his ideas were orthodox (*Hier. Apol. 3,21,24*). In his translation of the *Sextii Sententiae*, Rufinus added some that could have come from Evagrius; indeed, in his preface he declares that he has added *electa quaedam* on his own initiative.<sup>841</sup> Again, in 402 or 403 CE Rufinus translated and continued the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Eusebius,<sup>842</sup> an admirer of Origen; here he greatly praises the Cappadocian Fathers, as admirers of Origen themselves. Moreover, in Book 6 he added independent details to the biography of Origen transmitted by Eusebius, thus showing that he was very well informed on Origen’s life on the basis of independent sources. He significantly exalts Didymus, his own teacher, and quotes (*HE 2,7*) St. Anthony’s words on

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and consume you with bitterness” (tr. Sinkewicz slightly changed); *Gnostikos* 32: “Close your mouth to those who *slander* in your hearing; and do not be amazed when you are *accused by many*, for this is a *temptation from the demons*” (tr. Dysinger).

<sup>838</sup> *Hom. 2 in Ps. 36, 2: fortassis melius est iniustum esse quam iustum [...] iniquos prosperis successibus agere in via [P.: vita] sua [...] donec veniat et nostrum saeculum. [...] Impossibile autem est et in praesenti saeculo bona consequi et in futuro.*

<sup>839</sup> *Hom. 3 in Ps. 36, 6: etiamsi quaerenda sunt quae ad victum necessaria sunt, absque iniustitia quaerantur. Iniusti vero nihil curant de iustitia [...] Unum e duobus fieri necesse sit: id est, aut multum acquirere cum iniustitia, aut modicum cum iustitia [...] multae divitiae in iniquitate censentur.*

<sup>840</sup> See N. Moine, “Melaniana,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 15 (1980) 3–79.

<sup>841</sup> Cf. H. Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus* (Cambridge, 1959), 161–162; I. Ramelli, “Sentences of Sextus,” in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, eds. R. Bagnall–K. Brodersen–C. Champion–A. Erskine–S. Huebner (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>842</sup> Rufinus’s was the only exception to the lack of histories of the church in the Latin West. See R. Kany, “*Tempora Christiana: vom Umgang des antiken Christentums mit Geschichte*,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 10 (2006) 564–579.

Didymus's spiritual sight, which enabled him to see the light of God; these words were mentioned also by Socrates. He also praises distinctively Origenian Desert Fathers such as the two Macarii—about whom he includes anecdotes—, Isidore, and Pambus, whom he is proud to have met and conversed with. He mentions their sufferings during the anti-Arian persecution in Egypt. Rufinus, furthermore, exalts the Origenian monk John of Lycopolis, about whom he adds some excerpts—in his own Latin translation—from the anonymous *Historia monachorum* (404 CE), also providing an eyewitness testimony concerning him. Rufinus also exalts Ammonius, one of the Tall Brothers, the Origenian monks who were chased away by Theophilus. Those who met him attest that “nobody else among the Fathers had entered more deeply the recesses of perfect Wisdom.” What is most important, Rufinus adds to Eusebius's history the section on Evagrius, whom he praises as “extremely learned.” “No other brother,” Rufinus observes, “had ever reached such a knowledge of subtle and spiritual realities.” It is possible that he exchanged letters with Evagrius himself.<sup>843</sup> Indeed, Rufinus's activity as a translator of Evagrius perfectly matches his program of translation of Origen. It is not surprising that in 414 CE Jerome, long after his U-turn against Origen and his followers, lamented this activity in *Ep.* 133,3. He states with disappointment that Evagrius is read by many people, not only in the East now, but also in the West, thanks to Rufinus's translations.

In 403–404 AD Rufinus translated Origen's Homilies on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus,<sup>844</sup> Numbers, Joshua, and Judges, in which the Alexandrian master contrasted the Marcionite and “Gnostic” tenet of the division between the God of the OT and that of the NT, and consequently separated justice and mercy in God. What Origen and Rufinus, instead, support is that God punishes with justice, but in the end, by mercy, liberates every soul (*Hom. in Jesu Nave* 5,5). God's Providence is infallible and uninfluenced by the deceptions of the astrologers, *mathematici*, which cannot separate us from God's love (Rom 8:39).

In his *Expositio Symboli*, in 404 CE, Rufinus returns to a distinction—dear to him, Origen, and Nazianzen, as I have pointed out—between the articles of faith and what remains open to discussion. He notes that, while for the

<sup>843</sup> According to G. Bunge, *Evagrius Pontikos Briefe aus der Wüste* (Trier, 1986), 184–185, 193, 200. He indicates the following letters as addressed to Rufinus in Evagrius's Syriac corpus: 5, 7, 10, 19, 22, 32, 36, 40, 44, 49.

<sup>844</sup> Trimming in the translation of Origen's *Homilies on Leviticus* is due to Rufinus's lack of interest in some specific problems: see C. Noce, “Some Questions about Rufinus' Translation of Origen's *Homiliae in Leviticum*,” in *Studia Patristica* 43 (2006) 451–458.

Trinity one uses *credere in*, “to believe in,” for the church and the resurrection one does not use it (4; 34).<sup>845</sup> Rufinus denies that there may ever be an opposition between what Scripture teaches and the *logos*. He keeps his distance from the hypothesis of an absolution of the devil, who deserves to be condemned (37), but he raises no objections against the apokatastasis of human sinners. In this work, too, Rufinus introduces Origenian and Evagrian elements: the absolute—and not numerical—unity of God the Trinity, the generation of the Son as splendour from light; the soul that Christ received as a mediator when he got incarnated; the flesh of Christ as a bait to deceive and catch the devil.<sup>846</sup>

Rufinus also translated Origen's Commentary on Romans in 405/406 CE,<sup>847</sup> in 407 CE in Aquileia he wrote a preface to this work addressed to Heraclius, who had asked him to translate this masterpiece of Origen's maturity, while Rufinus was translating his simpler homilies. Rufinus denounces the interpolations which had crept into that commentary, some books of which are absent from almost all libraries. Rufinus admits that he has reduced the original work, which was in fifteen books and more than 40,000 lines. In the final peroration, written at the end of his translation of the Commentary, Rufinus observes that he had translated Origen's homilies on Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus differently; there, where Origen was more edifying than exegetical, he had endeavoured to reduce the oral style of the original. On the contrary, Origen's exegeses of Joshua, Judges, and Psalms 36–38 have not required modifications. But the translation of Origen's Commentary on Romans has been a labour to Rufinus, though a joyous one. Only, he declares that he fears the usual calumnies. These slanderers exhorted him to publish this work under his own name, so to be able to accuse him, but Rufinus publishes it under the name of Origen, the real author, since this is the right thing:

Ego, qui plus conscientiae meae quam nomini defero, etiamsi addere aliqua videor et explere quae desunt, aut breviare quae longa sunt, *furari* tamen titulum eius qui fundamenta operis iecit et construendi aedificii materiam praebuit, *rectum non puto*.<sup>848</sup>

<sup>845</sup> For this distinction, which in Greek is πιστεύω εἰς, πιστεύω + dative, and πιστεύω + accusative, see I. Ramelli, “Alcune osservazioni su *credere*,” *Maia* n.s. 51 (2000) 67–83; Eadem, *Studi su Fides* (Madrid, 2002).

<sup>846</sup> Cf. Clark, *Controversy*, 185.

<sup>847</sup> This, according to C. Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbrieftext des Rufinus* (Freiburg, 1985), 43–104.

<sup>848</sup> On Rufinus's translation method see at least E.C. Brooks, “The Translation Techniques of Rufinus of Aquileia,” in *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982) 357–364.

Rufinus then translated Origen's Homilies on Numbers while he was watching the fire of Rhegium under the Gothic invasion, and in 410 CE he added a preface to Ursacius. Here, he mentioned his own promise to translate all that has been written by Adamantius in his maturity concerning the Law of Moses. Rufinus says that, working during the night, he had collected all that Origen had written on Numbers, both homilies and excerpts. He also explains that, unlike the commentaries, in which Origen elucidated everything word for word, homilies and excerpt provide a more general interpretation. Rufinus observes that for the completion of the translation of Origen's works on the Law only that on Deuteronomy was missing; Rufinus will translate this if the Lord will return a better sight to him.<sup>849</sup>

All of Rufinus's translations of Origen and Evagrius show something else as well: that many people in the West must have been interested in Origen's and Evagrius's thought.<sup>850</sup> In this framework, Rufinus, who had brilliantly realised that Origen's doctrine, protology and eschatology, was directed against determinism with a view to theodicy, wanted to neutralise the attack of astrological determinists, especially with his translation of *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* within his program of promotion of Origen in the Latin West (*Ap. c. Hier.* 2,45). He also shows that Jerome was perfectly aware that Origen's protology and eschatology aimed at saving theodicy (*ibid.* 1,27–28). Only in this way can God's love and mercy be reconciled with God's justice. Rufinus's aim, unlike that of Jerome, was clearly the defence of Origen in a period in which charges against him and misunderstandings were intensifying. This is why Rufinus began to write after the outbreak of the Origenistic controversy, and limited himself to translating Origen's works, not in a surreptitious manner, but putting the name of Origen as the author and not simply appropriating Origen's thought and exegesis. Jerome, on the contrary, had already written a great deal before the Origenistic controversy, moreover mostly writing in his own name and drawing a lot on Origen. His intention was not to defend Origen, but he simply used his thought and exegesis as the best source available for his own. And then, after the watershed of the Origenistic controversy, his intention became, again, not to defend Origen, but to accuse him. Even in this phase, however, he did not stop relying on Origen's thought and exegesis, which shows the political rather than intellectual nature of his U-turn.

<sup>849</sup> For the last part of Rufinus's production see Hammond, "The Last Ten Years."

<sup>850</sup> Cf. Gasparro, *Origene e la tradizione, praes.* Chs. 3–6; E. Prinzivalli, "La controversia origeniana di fine IV secolo e la diffusione della conoscenza di Origene in Occidente," *Augustinianum* 46 (2006) 35–50.

*d. Rufinus's Allegiances and Paulinus of Nola*

Toward the end of his earthly life Rufinus exchanged an affectionate epistolary correspondence with Paulinus of Nola, who had greatly praised the Origenian lady Melania the Elder and her circle (Paul. *Ep.* 29; 46; 47; *Carm.* 21). Rufinus's own friendship with Melania was lifelong, just as his allegiance to Origen. Unlike Jerome or Theophilus, who were officially favourable to Origen or against him only for a period in their lives, Rufinus was a faithful Origenian for the whole of his life. Already in the 370s he was in contact with Origenism. Coming from Aquileia, he met Melania in Rome or in Egypt. He visited Nitria,<sup>851</sup> the site of Origenian monks. In the late 370s Rufinus reached Melania in Palestine, where they built monasteries on the Mount of Olives; Melania greatly helped Rufinus with her wealth. It was in the monastery of Melania and Rufinus that Evagrius took refuge when he had to leave Constantinople hurriedly in 382 CE.<sup>852</sup> From Palestine, they kept in touch with Evagrius, who had meanwhile left for Egypt. Evagrius wrote the *Rule for Nuns* probably for Melania, and perhaps his *Letter to Melania* as well; in any case, if it was not addressed to her, it was to Rufinus, and it entirely focuses on Origenian motifs and apokatastasis.<sup>853</sup> Rufinus was the addressee of letters from Evagrius, as Melania and John of Jerusalem were; one from John was brought by Palladius to Evagrius. Rufinus translated Evagrius's *Sententiae ad fratres* and *ad virgines* and his *Kephalaia* on prayer, as well as, probably, his *Praktikos*. Clearly this program of translations of Evagrius in Rufinus's mind was an ideal match to the translation of Origen.

A link between Evagrius and Rufinus's community was Palladius, who was close to the Origenian "party" and accompanied Melania from Jerusalem to Egypt, where he met Evagrius and the Origenian monks (Pall. *HL* 55; 11; 23; 35).<sup>854</sup> Jerome (*Dial. c. Pelag.* prol. 2) attests that Origenism was spread not only by Rufinus, but also by Palladius. The latter probably brought to Jerusalem Evagrius's writings when the Origenian monks took refuge there

<sup>851</sup> See H.G. Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries of the Wādi 'N-Natrūn* (New York, 1932); F. Wisse, "Gnosticism and Early Monasticism in Egypt," in *Gnosis*, ed. B. Aland (Göttingen, 1978), 431–440. In these Antonian monasteries of Low Egypt the works of Origen and Evagrius were cultivated. This milieu was that of Didymus, John of Jerusalem, Rufinus, Palladius, Pambus and the Tall Brothers, and then Daniel in the sixth century. See V. Grossi, "L'origenismo latino negli scritti agostiniani," *Augustinianum* 46 (2006) 51–88; B. Dahlman, *St. Daniel of Sketis* (Uppsala, 2007); T. Vivian, *Witness to Holiness: Abba Daniel of Scetis* (Kalamazoo, 2008).

<sup>852</sup> See above in this same chapter, the section on Evagrius.

<sup>853</sup> See above in this same chapter, the section on Evagrius.

<sup>854</sup> Cf. Clark, *Controversy*, 188–189; J.G. Bunge, "Palladiana I," *Studia Monastica* 32 (1990) 79–129.

after their expulsion from Egypt in the summer of 400 CE. Writings of Evagrius were probably copied and preserved in Rufinus's monastery. Evagrius corresponded with the Origenians John of Jerusalem, a protector of Rufinus, and Anatolius, a monk with whom Rufinus was well acquainted and to whom Evagrius had dedicated his *Praktikos*, *Gnostikos*, and *Kephalaia Gnostika* (the latter in particular is the work in which he most clearly supported the doctrine of apokatastasis). He remained for a long time on the Mount of Olives and appears in the Coptic version of the *Historia Lausiaca* together with Melania the Elder: in Egypt he brought a present to the Origenian monk Pambus. Both Melania the Elder and Melania the Younger belonged to the Origenian "party," as well as Rufinus, Pinianus, Melania the Younger's husband, and Apronianus.<sup>855</sup>

Paulinus of Nola was friends with Rufinus, to whom he addressed letters and whom he asked to translate the Ps. Clementines into Latin.<sup>856</sup> He was also an admirer of Melania the Elder, who may have been a relation of his; he mentions her in Letter 29 and praises her and her family in *Carm.* 21. Before the outbreak of the Origenian controversy, Paulinus corresponded with Augustine, whose anti-Manichaean polemic he appreciated. Now, it is not accidental that it is in his most important anti-Manichaean work that Augustine embraced and expounded the doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>857</sup> Paulinus's and Augustine's correspondence was held in abeyance in the years 397–408, exactly during the Origenian controversy. Paulinus, like Origen, was hostile to determinism and predestination, and insisted on both human freewill and divine Providence without perceiving any contradiction between these. He thought that Adam would not be punished forever (*Ep.* 23,44). As I have mentioned, it is to Paulinus that Jerome, in *Ep.* 85,3, said that the best treatment of the question of free will and Providence was Book 3 of Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, that in which Origen started from the defence of human free will and ended up with apokatastasis.<sup>858</sup>

In Jerome's "party" were Paula (who, however, died in the very first years of Jerome's volte-face, in 404, and was rather friends with him during his Origenian period<sup>859</sup>), Fabiola, Marcella—to whom he attributes the

<sup>855</sup> Clark, *Controversy*, 24 ff.

<sup>856</sup> F.X. Murphy, "Rufinus of Aquileia and Paulinus of Nola," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 2 (1956) 79–91.

<sup>857</sup> See below, Ch. 4, the section on Augustine.

<sup>858</sup> Demonstration in my "La coerenza."

<sup>859</sup> Paula was the young widow of a pagan senator and mother of five children, among whom Eustochium, who chose the life of a nun from the beginning. Her mother, too, after the death of her spouse embraced a life of asceticism; when Jerome returned to Rome in 382 CE

beginning of the condemnation of the Origenian party in Rome—, Pam-machius, Oceanus, and Eusebius of Cremona, the dedicatee of two commen-taries of Jerome. Eusebius, according to Rufinus, *Ap.* 1,19–21, altered his trans-lation of Περὶ ἀρχῶν and had the altered redaction circulate. He also brought to Simplicianus of Milan the letter of pope Anastasius that condemned Origen's works and shows that Eusebius had indicated to the pope the “blasphemous” passages in Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν (*Anast. Ep. ad Simpl.* 2–3). Many who were involved in the Origenian controversy were also involved in the Pelagian one, perhaps also due to the (albeit ungrounded) presuppo-sition that there was a direct link between Origen's ideas and Pelagianism. Indeed, it seems to me probable that the anti-Pelagian polemic contributed to Jerome's own hostility to Origen, just as it was the case with Augustine.<sup>860</sup> Some characters can be seen as pacifiers between the two “parties,” such as Chromatius of Aquileia, who asked Rufinus to translate Eusebius's *Historia ecclesiastica*, and asked Jerome to become reconciled with Rufinus (*Hier. Ap.* 3,2).<sup>861</sup>

All this shows that, as in the case of Theophilus, so also in that of Jerome, much of the Origenist controversy of that day depended on political con-siderations and on contingency. Much also rested on gross misunderstand-ings and even the lack of direct reading of Origen's works, or, even worse, according to Origen's and Rufinus's denunciations, the deliberate alteration of these works.<sup>862</sup>

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he became the spiritual director of their ascetic circle. After Jerome's departure from Rome in 385, Paula, after getting rid of her large property, also left Rome for Bethlehem, where she founded a double monastery, for women and men, in 386 CE. After her death, her daughter Eustochium († 418) succeeded her in the direction of the female monastery.

<sup>860</sup> On Jerome's polemics against Pelagianism: G. Caruso, “Girolamo antipelagiano,” *Augus-tinianum* 49 (2009) 65–118.

<sup>861</sup> See my “Cromazio e Ambrogio: vescovi di Chiese contermini,” in *Cromazio di Aquileia al crocevia di genti e religioni*, ed. S. Piussi (Milan, 2009), 274–279. The Jerome-Rufinus con-troversy depended on much else than Origen; in fact, the pro-Origen and anti-Origen parties had many other interests and bonds of patronage, hospitality, friendships, and so on, which can partially be reconstructed through the letters exchanged by their members. See Clark, *Controversy*, 16–19 and *passim*.

<sup>862</sup> Ramelli, “Decadence Denounced.”

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FROM AUGUSTINE TO ERIUGENA LATIN, GREEK, AND SYRIAC RECEPTIONS OF ORIGEN'S APOKATASTASIS THEORY

*Ipsum siquidem Dei Uerbum [...], accipiens  
humanam naturam, omnem creaturam  
accepit.*

*Ac per hoc, si humanam naturam, quam  
accepit, saluauit et restaurauit,*

*omnem profecto creaturam uisibilem et  
inuisibilem restaurauit.*

(Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 5,25)

#### *Augustine: From Adhesion to Rejection?*

What still comes as a surprise to most scholars, an important chapter of the history of Origen's influence, and especially of the influence of Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis and of the whole metaphysical view that was attached to it, is the chapter that concerns St. Augustine of Hippo (†430).<sup>1</sup> My point is that Augustine espoused Origen's apokatastasis doctrine, and more of his ontology, above all during his anti-Manichaean phase—and he seems to have done so, paradoxically, when he was convinced that he still ignored Origen's thought. Later on, after being misinformed enough about Origen's theory of apokatastasis, he condemned it as heretical and in his *Retractationes* recanted the passage in which he had supported it. Indeed, in his later writings Augustine shows to entertain a very imprecise view of what Origen maintained, while some of his first writings reveal truly Origenian arguments, even though at that time he appears to have been unaware that the arguments he was using were *Origen's* arguments. Indeed, during his

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<sup>1</sup> I renounce offering bibliographical indications for Augustine, given the immensity of an ever-growing literature. I shall only give some references that are strictly relevant to the questions I am treating here, and refer readers to the database [www.findingaugustine.org](http://www.findingaugustine.org).



philosophical and theological formation, Augustine came to know something of Origen's thought, including the apokatastasis theory, which he used in his anti-Manichaean polemic, but he probably did not know that it was *Origen's* thought. Augustine's Platonic formation was grounded in Plotinus, Porphyry, Ambrose, and Victorinus;<sup>2</sup> as for Origen's Christian Platonism, Augustine may have absorbed it through Ambrose and the Milanese circle, Hilary, Victorinus of Poetovium, who transmitted Origen's ideas in an anonymous form, and/or by means of partial translations and collections prior to Jerome's and Rufinus's translations (but already before Rufinus began translating Origen in 397, Jerome had already translated 78 homilies of Origen, besides paraphrasing his exegetical works in an anonymous way), or even anonymous manuscripts or compilations, which contained translations of Origen's works without identifying him as the author. That such manuscripts circulated is testified to by at least three examples:

- 1) the *Commentarioli in Matthaeum*, an anonymous work that existed in the time of Augustine and very probably was a compilation of Origen's exegeses;<sup>3</sup>
- 2) the manuscripts mentioned by Pamphilus in *Apol.* 12: already toward the end of the third century, according to Pamphilus, anonymous manuscripts circulated that contained works by Origen, so that their readers did not know that they were Origen's;<sup>4</sup>
- 3) The Latin translations anterior to those of Rufinus and different from those of Jerome that are mentioned by Rufinus in the very first section of the Preface to his translation of Book 1 of Origen's *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*. Here, he testifies that many people in the West asked for Latin translations of Origen's texts in order to have personal access to them, and this before Rufinus began his own program of translation: *Scio quam plurimos fratrum, scientiae Scripturarum desiderio prouocatos, poposcisse ab aliquantis eruditissimis uiris et Graecarum litterarum peritis ut Origenem*

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<sup>2</sup> See at least G. Catapano, "Augustine," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. L.P. Gerson (Cambridge, 2010), 552–581.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine read these *Commentarioli in Matthaeum* in Carthage, in the library of Aurelius, who was convinced that this work was either composed or translated by Jerome. But Jerome denied any relationship with this work.

<sup>4</sup> *Accidere solet, vel casu vel interdum studio, ut nomine in codice non praetitulato legatur aliquid ipsius [sc. Origenis] in auribus obtrectatorum quasi alterius tractatoris; quod tam diu placet et laudatur atque in omni admiratione habetur quam diu nomen non fuerit indicatum. At ubi Origenis cognita fuerint esse quae placebant, statim displicent, statim haeretica esse dicuntur.*

*Romanum facerent et Latinis auribus eum donarent.* One of these, Rufinus adds, was Jerome, but there were several others. Augustine may well have known, more or less directly, one or more of these pre-Rufinian translations of Origen.

In the Eighties of the fourth century, as is clear from *Ord.* 1,11,32, Augustine embraced the Platonic distinction between the sense-perceptible and the intelligible world that was shared by Origen,<sup>5</sup> and, like Origen, valued Greek philosophy. Another point of convergence is found in *C. Acad.* 2,2,5: the theme of the return to one's self or authentic being, and that of the return of the human being, image of God, to its original state before the fall. This is, interestingly, one of the main features of the apokatastasis doctrine, although in this specific passage Augustine does not insist on the universality of this return. The *libri pleni* to which Augustine refers in *C. Acad.* 2,2,5, which aroused his enthusiasm, are generally understood by critics as works of Plotinus or Porphyry, or both, but by György Heidl as *Platonic* Christian works of Origen, especially his homilies on the Song of Songs (in Jerome's translation, completed in Rome in 383 CE) and possibly passages from his commentary on the same Biblical book. Ambrose himself used Origen's exegesis of the Song of Songs in his homilies *De bono mortis* and *De Isaac*, which Augustine probably knew before his conversion.<sup>6</sup> In this case, Origen's thought reached Augustine in an anonymous form. Further affinities with Origen's exegesis of the Song of Songs are found in *C. Acad.* 2,2,5 and *Ord.* 1,8,24.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Origen does maintain the Platonic pattern of two levels of reality, even in a Scriptural commentary such as that on the Song of Songs, 2,8,17: *aurum verum in illis quae incorporea sunt et invisibilia ac spiritalia intelligatur; similitudo vero auri, in quo, non est ipsa veritas, sed umbra veritatis, ista corporea et visibilia accipiantur.* This is why he, like Plato, prescribes the abandonment not only of the 'flesh' in the moral sense of 'sin', but also of everything corporeal: the Logos exhorts the soul *ut non solum extra carnis vitia efficiatur, sed etiam extra omne quidquid corporeum et visibile continetur in mundo* (*Comm. in Cant.* 4,2,7). The very twofold structure of the universe—Origen maintains—, visible and invisible, sense-perceptible and intelligible, was predisposed by God in order to have rational creatures investigate, exert their intelligence, and discover the truth by passing from the sensible on to the intelligible plane: *ita igitur cuncta [...] ex visibilibus referri possunt ad invisibilia et a corporalibus ad incorporea et a manifestis ad occulta, ut ipsa creatura mundi tali quadam dispensatione condita intelligatur per divinam sapientiam, quae rebus ipsis et exemplis invisibilia nos de visibilibus doceat et a terrenis nos transferat ad caelestia* (ibid. 3,13,27).

<sup>6</sup> G. Heidl, *Origen's Influence on the Young Augustine* (Piscataway, NJ—Louaize, Lebanon, 2003), 27–36, thinks that the *libri pleni* were, from Augustine's viewpoint, "complete books," in that they included Platonic metaphysics completed by the Christian doctrine.

<sup>7</sup> Heidl, *Influence*, 37–61.

The direct or indirect inspirer of Augustine's argument against divine anthropomorphism in his first exegetical work, devoted to the allegoresis of Gen 1–3, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (1,17,27), is clearly Origen.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, as I shall show, in his anti-Manichaean works Augustine used Origen's arguments, especially in the fields of ontology and apokatastasis. Jean Pépin noticed Augustine's dependence on Origen in his first commentaries on Genesis; his argument focussed on Augustine's interpretation of the "skin tunics" there, which is the same as Origen's in *Hom. in Lev.* 6,2; Roland Teske, as well as Pier Franco Beatrice, supposed a mediation of Ambrose and the Milanese circle to explain how Augustine could know Origen's thought from 385 CE onward.<sup>9</sup> Augustine's *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos* stems from 388/89 CE. At that time, Origen's *Homilies on Genesis* had not yet been translated by Rufinus. But their contents could well have been transmitted by Theodorus or Simplicianus orally, or by Ambrose's homilies on the *Hexaëmeron* and on Paradise, Hilarius's treatises on the Psalms and Gregory of Elvira's treatise on the creation of the human being. Or else, Augustine may have read a Latin anthology of Origenian exegeses of Genesis.<sup>10</sup> In fact, Ambrose's mediation can explain much, but not everything,<sup>11</sup> which suggests that it must not have been the only factor. The following Origenian characteristics are found in Augustine's *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos*: the fondness for etymology, especially applied to Hebrew words; Biblical allegoresis, which Augustine will abandon later, in *De Genesi ad litteram*; the correspondence between Adam and Christ, who left the Father to marry the Church, and especially the above-mentioned interpretation—highlighted by Pépin—of the "skin tunics" in Gen 3:21 as mortal corporeality. The last

<sup>8</sup> Heidl, *Influence*, 105–110. Cf. R.J. Teske, "Origen and St. Augustine's First Commentaries on Genesis," in *Origeniana V* (Leuven, 1992), 179–186. On the development and transformation of Augustine's interpretation of Genesis see at least L. Fladerer, *Augustinus als Exeget: zu seinen Kommentaren des Galaterbriefes und der Genesis* (Wien, 2010); Y. Kyung Kim, *Augustine's Changing Interpretation of Gen 1–3* (Lewiston, 2006); A. Parvan, "Genesis 1–3: Augustine and Origen," *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012) 56–92, who thinks that "in *De Gen. c. Man.* Augustine seems to carry on a solid dialogue with Origen" although he never mentions him (ibid. 91).

<sup>9</sup> J. Pépin, "Saint Augustin et le symbolisme néoplatonicien de la vêtue," in *Augustinus Magister*, I (Paris, 1954), 293–306; Teske, "Origen and Saint Augustine's First Commentaries"; P.F. Beatrice, "Le tuniche di pelle," in *La tradizione dell'Egkrateia*, ed. Bianchi, 463.

<sup>10</sup> So Heidl, *Influence*, 77–104. Ambrose as a mediator between Origen and Augustine is presupposed by F. van Fleteren, "Principles of Augustine's Hermeneutic," in *Augustine Biblical Exegete*, eds. Idem–J.C. Schnaubelt (New York, 2001), 2–4, and M.-A. Vannier, "Origène et Augustin interprètes de la création," in *Origeniana VI*, 724.

<sup>11</sup> For instance, not details of Augustine's exegesis of Gen 1:1–6; 1:7; 1:26; 1:27–28, and 2:7, common with Origen but not with Ambrose. See Heidl, *Influence*, 111–133.

point, which is developed in *Gen. adv. Man.* 2,21,32 (*ad pelliceas tunicas, id est ad huius vitae mortalitatem*), coincides with Origen's exegesis in *Hom. in Lev.* 6,2,276–278 (*pelliciis tunicis quae essent mortalitatis*) and probably in his lost *Commentary on Genesis*. His initial interpretation of Paradise will be rejected by Augustine later, which will arouse John the Scot Eriugena's criticism of Augustine's later exegesis.<sup>12</sup> Also, in *Gen. adv. Man.* 2,8,10 Augustine's exegesis appears close to Origen's notion of the original state of human beings before they were covered in a heavy, mortal body as a consequence of the fall. Another conception that is shared by Origen and Augustine in this phase is that of the eternal existence of the Ideas of all beings in God's Wisdom (Christ-Logos). It is debated whether Augustine embraced the pre-existence of souls at this stage, but this is a doctrine that Origen himself did not support.<sup>13</sup>

What is more, in his anti-Manichaean and Platonic work—a *Christian Platonic* work, like Origen's—*De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*, belonging to the same phase as *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos*, and dating to about 391 CE,<sup>14</sup> Augustine adheres to, and develops, Origen's conception of the different conditions of rational creatures as a consequence of the movements of their free will. It is not accidental that precisely this work includes an important proof of Augustine's adhesion to the apokatastasis theory at that time, and this work reveals that Augustine's protology and eschatology in his anti-Manichaean phase are entirely Origenian. This has been overlooked by scholarship so far. The most important passage with respect to the present investigation, and the most relevant to the question of Augustine's adhesion to the doctrine of apokatastasis, is *De mor.* 2,7,9:

*Dei bonitas [...] omnia deficientia sic ordinat [...] donec ad id recurrant unde defecerunt.*

<sup>12</sup> See below at the end of this chapter the section on Eriugena. His criticism addresses esp. *De Genesi ad litteram* and *De civitate Dei*.

<sup>13</sup> See my *Preexistence of Souls*. On scholars for and against Augustine's initial adhesion to the preexistence of souls see Parvan, "Genesis 1–3," 84 and n. 50.

<sup>14</sup> PL 32,1309–1378, then ed. J.B. Bauer, CSEL 90 (Turnhout, 1992). On this work see now K.J. Coyle, *Manichaeism and its Legacy* (Leiden, 2009), 209–263. On Augustine's Manichaean phase, albeit with no interest in Origen's influence, see also J.D. BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma 1: Conversion and Apostasy* (Philadelphia, 2010), who argues that Augustine's "conversion" from Manichaeism to "Catholic" Christianity was not so dramatic as he depicted it, but rather a long process. For a detailed discussion of this book see the review article by J. van Oort, "Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma in Context," *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011), 543–567. More on Augustine and Manichaeism in *In Search of Truth. Augustine, Manichaeism, and Other Gnosticism. Studies for J. van Oort at Sixty*, ed. J.A. van den Berg et al. (Leiden, 2011). On Manichaeism at least N.J. Baker-Brian, *Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscovered* (London, 2011).

The goodness of God orders and leads *all* the beings that have fallen until they *return / are restored* to the condition from which they had fallen.

Augustine is briefly presenting the doctrine of universal apokatastasis: all creatures (*omnia*) that have fallen are restored to their original condition by the Godhead in its supreme goodness. Origen also thought that the agent of apokatastasis is God's goodness. What is more, a precise parallel with Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν is detectable:

*In unum sane finem putamus quod bonitas Dei per Christum suum universam revocet creaturam.* (Princ. 1,6,1)

We think that the *goodness of God*, through his Christ, will *call back / restore all creatures* to one and the same end.

Indeed, *Dei bonitas* in Augustine perfectly corresponds to *bonitas Dei* in Origen as the subject; the object, *omnia deficientia* in Augustine, corresponds to *universam creaturam* in Origen (since in his view all rational creatures have fallen, more or less, except the so-called "soul of Christ"), and the action of restoration in Augustine, *ordinat donec ad id recurrant unde defecerunt*, corresponds to Origen's *in unum finem revocet*. The correspondence is even closer if one considers that for Origen one is not "called" to the *telos*, but is "called *back*" to it; the attainment of the *telos* is indeed a restoration or apokatastasis, because the *telos* is similar (albeit better than) the original condition from which rational creatures have fallen. It is perfectly possible that Augustine knew this passage of Origen's (besides others similar) in a Latin version or compilation. Indeed, partial versions or collections seem to have circulated even before Rufinus translated Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν in the last years of the fourth century.

It is crucial that in Augustine's opinion, just as in Origen's, the eventual restoration will be a work of God's goodness. At least another fundamental passage from Origen attests to this: *Comm. in Io.* 6,57. Here, the eventual universal submission to Christ and to God is declared to coincide with universal salvation because only this interpretation is "worthy of *the goodness of the God of the universe*" (τῆς ἀγαθότητος τοῦ τῶν ὅλων Θεοῦ). Now, according to both Origen and Augustine, God's goodness is far from being simply a kind of psychological trait (encompassing kindness, mercy, and the like), but it is an ontological reality, *the* funding ontological reality, namely, that the Divinity is the supreme and absolute Good, the fullness of Good and Being, as opposed to evil, which lacks ontological reality and is only defined in a negative way, as a privation of Good. This is fundamental to remark, because Augustine's emphasis on the identification of God with the supreme Good and Being, as opposed to evil as non-being, was a core

argument against Manichaeism, in the “anti-heretical” battle that Augustine was fighting in those years, and above all precisely in *De moribus*. Augustine, from the very opening of this work, gives the following definition of God as the supreme Good: *summum bonum, quo non est quidquam melius et superius*. This supreme Good is transcendent (it transcends time), but it is not beyond Being; rather, it is the supreme Being (*maxime esse*),<sup>15</sup> whose opposite is non-being: *Cui si contrarium recte quaeras, nihil omnino est. Esse enim contrarium non habet nisi non esse. Nulla est ergo Deo natura contraria*. This is the basic ontological difference from Manichaeism, which regarded evil as a substance, a being, opposite to God.<sup>16</sup> Augustine objects that all substances are creatures of God, unlike evil.<sup>17</sup> Augustine’s concern, like Origen’s, is theodicy; thus he is keen to highlight that God is not the author of evil. Augustine describes God, the Being par excellence, in very Origenian terms from the ontological point of view:

Aliud dicit bonum quod summe ac per se bonum est, non participatione aliquis boni, sed propria natura et essentia; aliud quod participando bonum est [...]. Malum ostenditur non secundum essentiam, sed secundum privationem. (De mor. 4,6)

God is the only supreme and absolute Good, not good by participation, but per se (this was the application of Plato’s definition of the Ideas, which are something per se and not by participation; the highest Idea in Plato’s system was exactly that of the Good, which Origen applied to the Christian Godhead, by calling it αὐτοαγαθόν<sup>18</sup> and maintaining that creatures can only participate in this Goodness). What does not participate in God, who is the supreme Good and Being, does not exist. As a consequence, evil does not exist, precisely because it is not a creature of God and thus has no positive ontological status. God’s own creatures, unlike evil, have a positive ontological status, not independent like God’s, but deriving from God, and God does not permit that a creature of his may ever slip into non-being, that is to say, evil—a possibility opened up by the adhesion of a creature’s free will to evil—, because God created each of them in order for it to

<sup>15</sup> De mor. 1,1: *Hoc enim maxime esse dicendum est, quod semper eodem modo sese habet, quod omnimodo sui simile est, quod nulla ex parte corrumpi ac mutari potest, quod non subiacet tempori.*

<sup>16</sup> *Vos autem asseritis quamdam naturam atque substantiam malum esse (De mor. 2,2).*

<sup>17</sup> *Omnium naturarum atque substantiarum esse auctorem Deum, simul intelligitur [...] non esse Deum auctorem mali.*

<sup>18</sup> See my “Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 217–263.

exist, and exist in the Good. Origen already used this selfsame argument to support the eventual restoration, and not destruction, of the devil: this fallen creature will not be destroyed in its substance, but it will be restored after the destruction of its evilness, which is tantamount to its conversion to the Good; indeed, it will cease to be “enemy” and “death.”<sup>19</sup> It is noteworthy that Augustine employed the very same metaphysical arguments in his debate with the Manichaean Felix as well (404 ca.). While Felix held that evil has an ontological consistence of its own, Augustine deprived it of ontological status and insisted that it is a product of free will—Origen’s position, although Felix too admitted of some sort of free will.

Evil’s non substantiality and eschatological annihilation shows that the metaphysical conception that Origen and Augustine (at least in this phase) shared on Good as supreme Being and evil as non-being bears on eschatology. Indeed, not accidentally, it is here, at this point in his anti-Manichaean argument in *De moribus*, that Augustine passes from ontology to eschatology and puts forward the aforementioned paramount statement that God, qua supreme Good, will restore all beings into the original condition from which they have fallen. Here is the passage, which I must now quote in its entirety, to show its connection with Augustine’s larger ontological argument:

Sed *Dei bonitas* eo rem perducere non sinit, et *omnia deficientia* sic ordinat ut ibi sint ubi congruentissime possint esse, donec *ordinatis motibus ad id recurrant unde defecerunt*. Itaque etiam *animas rationales*, in quibus potentissimum est liberum arbitrium, *deficientes a se in inferioribus creaturae gradibus* ordinat ubi esse tales decet. Fiunt ergo miserae divino iudicio dum convenienter *pro meritis ordinantur*. Ex quo illud optime dictum est, quod insectari maxime soletis: “Ego facio bona et creo mala.” Creare namque dicitur condere et ordinare. Itaque in plerisque exemplaribus sic scriptum est: “Ego facio bona et condo mala.” Facere enim est, omnino quod non erat; condere autem, ordinare quod utcumque iam erat, *ut melius magisque sit*. Ea namque condit Deus, id est ordinat, cum dicit: *Condo mala quae deficiunt, id est ad non esse tendunt [...]* *Nihil per divinam providentiam ad id ut non sit pervenire permittitur [...]* quidquid est, in quantum est, ex Deo sit, in quantum autem ab essentia deficit, non sit ex Deo, sed tamen *divina providentia semper sicut universitati congruit ordinetur*. (De mor. 2,7,9–10)

This passage, in fact, is virtually the exposition of Origen’s doctrine. The fallen creatures of which Augustine is speaking here are primarily the intelligent creatures which Origen called *logika*, endowed with free will. These,

<sup>19</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section on Origen.

falling down from the status that naturally belonged to them (*deficientes a se*), are ordered into lower levels, as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa maintained, even using the essentially Stoic language of οἰκειώσις and ἀλλοτριώσις (falling down to inferior conditions was an alienation or ἀλλοτριώσις; the eventual apokatastasis will represent the re-appropriation of the condition that belongs to rational creatures).<sup>20</sup> Depending on the gravity of their fall, these fallen creatures are placed by God into different orders, which Origen indicated as angels, humans, or demons. The rational creatures that were assigned to the level of human beings, in Origen's view, experienced a transformation of their fine body into a heavy, corruptible, gendered, and mortal one, proper to the inferior level of animals. But God never abandons them, and does not permit that they fall into absolute evil or non-being. God's Providence always assists them, until they return to the condition from which they fell. Augustine's reference to *ordinatis motibus* also finds a parallel in Origen's philosophy of apokatastasis: all rational creatures will be restored, but each of them will come to the final restoration "in its own order," an order that depends on its own merits (compare here Augustine: *pro meritis ordinantur*). The very idea that Providence leads all creatures to the eventual restoration but at the same time is respectful of each one's free will and deserts is perfectly in line with Origen's thought (expressed for instance in *Princ.* 3,5,8: God's Providence is extended to all but respects each one's free will). Moreover, besides the passage I have analysed in *De moribus*, at least two other passages in Augustine (*Serm.* 45,10; *Lib. arb.* 3,217) develop Origen's notion that the *logika* change orders according to their merits.

Just as in this phase he appropriated Origen's eschatology,<sup>21</sup> so also did Augustine embrace the Origenian conception of the risen body as luminous, angelic, ethereal, and spiritual,<sup>22</sup> a conception that afterwards he dismissed (thereby attracting again Eriugena's criticism<sup>23</sup>). This is consistent with his Origenian protology in this period, revolving around the notion of an initially spiritual body covered with a heavy and mortal body because of the fall. In *De mor.* 2,52 Augustine is in perfect agreement with Origen, but also with Gregory of Nyssa, when he declares that the real human being

<sup>20</sup> I have studied this in "The Stoic Doctrine of *Oikeiōsis* and its Transformation."

<sup>21</sup> Even after Augustine's detachment from Origen's eschatology, the concern for eschatology remained paramount in his thought, even in his exegesis. That this is the case in particular in his *De doctrina Christiana* is nicely shown by E. Morgan, *The Incarnation of the Word: The Theology of Language of Augustine of Hippo* (London, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Heidl, *Influence*, 209–218.

<sup>23</sup> See below in this chapter, section on Eriugena.



consists in the intellectual soul. In this light, it is not too surprising that the *De Incarnatione Verbi ad Ianuarium*, which is an anthology from Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*,<sup>24</sup> was long attributed to Augustine. Such was the closeness of Augustine to Origen's Christian philosophy at that time, when Augustine used Origen's metaphysics against Manichaeism, just as Origen himself had used it against Gnosticism—and, paradoxically, when Augustine believed that he did not know Origen's thought. In the same way, it is not surprising that Augustine's concept of time, which Callahan deemed grounded in Basil, is in fact based on Basil's source: Origen.<sup>25</sup> And many elements indicate that Augustine continued to rely on Origen's ontological arguments even long after rejecting his apokatastasis doctrine.<sup>26</sup>

As is suggested by the homily, *Enarr. 2 in Ps. 31*, which he delivered in the summer of 401 CE, Augustine by then had read Origen's *Commentary on Romans* in Rufinus's version, and had borrowed from it many ideas on the topic of justification.<sup>27</sup> Did he know, at least at this point, that this work was by Origen? It seems so. This is why at that time, having read Origen's work directly (albeit in translation) and having not yet been misled about Origen's thought or engaged in the anti-Pelagian controversy, he did not yet deem Origen a heretic. Still in 404/5 CE, before the spread of the Pelagian controversy, Augustine in a letter blamed Jerome for criticising Origen,<sup>28</sup> a criticism that seemed to him to be inconsistent with Jerome's anterior praises of, and appeal to, Origen, and asked him the reason why he rejected Origen:

Origenem vero ac Didymum reprehensos abs te lego in recentioribus opusculis tuis, et non mediocriter, nec de mediocribus quaestionibus, quamvis *Origenem mirabiliter ante laudaveris*. Cum iis ergo errare puto quia nec te ipse

<sup>24</sup> On which see Gasparro, "Ps. Basilio *De incarnatione Domini* e Ps. Agostino *De incarnatione Verbi ad Ianuarium*," in eadem, *Origene e la tradizione origeniana in occidente* (Rome, 1998), 55–96.

<sup>25</sup> So P. Tzamalikos, *The Concept of Time in Origen* (Bern, 1991), 148–149.

<sup>26</sup> One example is given by his use of the ontological argument of the dependence of all beings on God, the supreme Being. This use is correctly demonstrated by J. Paletta, "Saint Augustine's Milan Vision Reconsidered," *Augustiniana* 58 (2008) 151–180; Id., "The Theme of Ontological Dependence in *Confessions* Book 7 Chapters 14–20," *Augustiniana* 61 (2011) 207–224. I only add that this is Origen's metaphysical heritage—a Christian Platonic heritage—which Augustine never repudiated.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. C.P.H. Bammel, "Justification by Faith in Augustine and Origen," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47 (1996) 223–235.

<sup>28</sup> On the letters exchanged between Jerome and Augustine see C. Fry, *Lettres croisées de Jérôme et Augustin*, traduites, présentées et annotées (Paris, 2010), based on the edition by I. Hilberg in CSEL 56,2.

patieris, quamvis hoc perinde dicatur, ac si in hac sententia non erraverint.  
 Nam quis est qui *se velit cum quolibet errare*? (Ep. 82,3,23)

The same inconsistency was denounced by Rufinus too.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, a phase of the so-called Origenist controversy had opened up in 393 CE in Palestine, with Jerome and Rufinus. Exactly because of this controversy and because of a change in the target of his polemic—from Manichaeans to Pelagians—Augustine too, like Jerome, repudiated Origen. But when he believed he had learnt all of Origen's thought, he had been in fact misguided by Orosius and Jerome, who meanwhile had turned hostile to Origen.

Here I shall limit myself to reconstructing Augustine's repudiation of the doctrine of apokatastasis, which he had embraced in the years of his polemic against Manichaeism, and to suggesting possible causes for this repudiation. The first sign of it, in 413 CE, seems to come from *De fide et operibus* 15,24, in which he attests that the supporters of apokatastasis, whom he calls "the merciful" (*miseriordes*), cited 1 Cor 3:11–15 in defence of their doctrine. Here, Paul speaks of some who will be saved immediately and others who will be saved "through fire," thus revealing that punishment in fire will be aimed at salvation and purification. In 415 CE, in his refutation of Origenism in *Ad Orosium* (8,10; cf. 5,5),<sup>30</sup> Augustine stated that God's purpose in the creation of this world was not the purification of the fallen rational creatures. What is more interesting, he argued that *ignis aeternus* must mean "eternal fire," or else the righteous' bliss could not be eternal. This argument, based on two parallel and opposite eternities, that of the blessedness of the righteous and that of the torments and death of the damned, was already used against the doctrine of apokatastasis in the passage ascribed to Basil that I have already analysed,<sup>31</sup> and will be used again by Justinian.<sup>32</sup> Origen, however, as I have demonstrated,<sup>33</sup> had already refuted this kind of argument by means of a syllogism in his Commentary on Romans, in which he argued that eternal life and eternal death cannot subsist together, since they are two contradictories. Augustine seems to have read Origen's Commentary on Romans in Latin more than ten years earlier, but he does not seem to take it into account here; perhaps he has forgotten, or not read, Origen's argument, or else he intentionally ignores it.

<sup>29</sup> See above, Ch. 3, section on Rufinus and Jerome.

<sup>30</sup> PL 42,669–678; R.J. O'Connell, "St Augustine's Criticism of Origen in the *Ad Orosium*," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 30 (1984) 84–99, argued that here Augustine does not criticise Origen's doctrine of the fall as Orosius did.

<sup>31</sup> See above, Ch. 3, section on Basil.

<sup>32</sup> See below in this chapter, section on Justinian.

<sup>33</sup> See above, Ch. 3, section on Basil.

The imprecision of the Latin vocabulary of eternity can help to explain Augustine's argument. While, as I have often mentioned, the Bible describes as αἰδιος only life in the world to come, thus declaring it to be "eternal," it never describes as αἰδιος punishment, death, and fire applied to human beings in the world to come; these are only and consistently called αἰώνιος, "belonging to the future aeon." But in Latin both adjectives are rendered with one and the same adjective, *aeternus* (or *sempiternus*), and their distinction was completely lost. This, of course, had important consequences on the development of the debate on apokatastasis. That Augustine was utterly unaware of the difference between the two Greek adjectives and the relevant implications is clear, not only from the aforementioned passage in *Ad Orosium*, but also from a passage that stems from the years of his anti-Pelagian controversy, *Gest. Pel.* 1,3,10:

In Origene dignissime detestatur ecclesia, quod etiam illi quos Dominus dicit *aeterno supplicio* puniendos, et ipse diabolus et angeli eius, post *tempus licet prolixum* purgati liberabuntur a poenis, et sanctis cum Deo regnantibus societate beatitudinis adhærebunt [...] Detestabiliter cum Origene sentiat quisquis dixerit aliquando eorum *finiri posse supplicium*, quod Dominus dixit *aeternum*.

Augustine refers twice to the words of the Lord that, he avers, declare the absolute eternity of otherworldly punishments. In those words, however, in the Gospels κόλασις is described as αἰώνιος, and not as αἰδιος. But Augustine, just as many Latin authors, was unable to grasp this distinction.

In a heresiological work, and according to the cliché of the heresiologists, in 417 CE, Augustine traced back Origen's supposed mistakes to Platonic roots: *a quibus [sc. Platonicis] ista didicit Origenes* (*De haer.* 43). Augustine himself was once enthusiastic about Platonism, and about Origen's Christian Platonism. But what he now considered to be errors of Origen were in fact distortions of his thought that by that time Augustine had received; more than Origen's thought proper, he was in fact speaking of Origenism. In the same work, another clear example of how distorted Origen's thought was in Augustine's reports at that time is found in *De haer.* 43. Here Augustine accuses Origen of maintaining that aeons will succeed to one another without end, and that in this infinite succession the devil will be purified and rational creatures will fall, be restored, and fall again, infinitely.<sup>34</sup> Augustine

<sup>34</sup> *Sunt huius Origenis alia dogmata quae catholica ecclesia omnino non recipit. In quibus nec ipsum falso arguit, nec potest ab eius defensoribus falli, maxime de purgatione et liberatione, ac rursus post longum tempus ad eadem mala revolutione rationalis universae creaturae. Quis enim catholicus Christianus vel doctus vel indoctus non vehementer exhorreat eam quam*

seems to either deliberately ignore or not to know that Origen thought that the series of aeons will stop at the end, when the final apokatastasis will take place and all rational creatures will be joined in ἀγάπη. Precisely for this reason, according to Origen, no creature will ever fall again, because “love never falls,” *caritas numquam cadit* in Rufinus’s translation.<sup>35</sup> This argument was put forward by Origen in his Commentary on Romans, which, as I have mentioned, Augustine had read; thus, he should have known that Origen did not maintain an infinite sequence of aeons and an infinite repetition of falls. Though, in *De haeresibus* Augustine seems to have either forgotten or ignored this point.

In another anti-Pelagian work, *C. Iul.* 5,47, Augustine rejects the hypothesis of the conversion and restoration of the devil as an error and ascribes it to Origen; for instance: *nisi forte dices etiam diabolus voluntate a bono lapsus; si voluerit, in bonum quod deseruit reversurum, et Origenis nobis instaurabis errorem* (6,10).<sup>36</sup> In 426 CE Augustine, with his *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, provided a kind of remake of Origen’s Περὶ ἀρχῶν 3. This book, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>37</sup> shows the very genesis of Origen’s apokatastasis theory as a kind of archaeology, from Origen’s refutation of “Gnostic” determinism in the framework of the question of theodicy to the theory of apokatastasis. Indeed, Henry Chadwick was right that a catalogue of echoes—including the polemical ones—of Origen in Augustine would amount to a big book,<sup>38</sup> and much earlier Cassian was right to read Augustine as a reader of Origen.<sup>39</sup>

Again in his refutation of Pelagius, whom he thought to have been inspired by Origen’s ideas (*Gest. Pel.* 1,3,9), Augustine dubbed the supporters

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*dicit purgationem malorum [...] ipsum etiam postremo diabolus atque angelos eius, quamvis post longissima tempora, purgatos atque liberatos, regno Dei lucique restitui, et rursus post longissima tempora omnes qui liberati sunt ad haec mala denuo relabi et reverti, et has vices alternantes beatitudinis et miseriarum rationalis creaturae semper fuisse, semper fore?*

<sup>35</sup> See my *Gregorio Sull’Anima*, Integrative Essay I, with demonstration.

<sup>36</sup> See above, ch. 1, section on Origen.

<sup>37</sup> “La coerenza della soteriologia origeniana: dalla polemica contro il determinismo gnostico all’universale restaurazione escatologica,” in *Pagani e cristiani alla ricerca della salvezza. Atti del XXXIV Incontro di Studiosi dell’Antichità Cristiana, Roma, Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, 5–7 maggio 2005* (Rome, 2006), 661–688.

<sup>38</sup> H. Chadwick, “Christian Platonism in Origen and Augustine,” in *Origeniana III* (Rome, 1985), 217–230, *praes.* 220.

<sup>39</sup> That Cassian read Augustine in this way is argued on good grounds by D. Keech, “John Cassian and the Christology of Romans 8,3,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (2010) 280–299. Cassian “situates Augustine within a tradition indebted to Origen, even after the Origenist Controversy” (296). On the problematical identity of Cassian see below in this same chapter the section devoted to him.

of the apokatastasis doctrine *misericordes*, describing them as “those merciful Christians who refuse to believe that infernal punishments will be *eternal*.” Origen is depicted as “the most merciful of all,” because of his doctrine of the eventual restoration of the devil. The Church, as Augustine maintains in his masterpiece, rightly disavows this doctrine “and many others, in particular the theory of *unending* shifts between misery and beatitude, and the *infinite* fluctuation between these states of predetermined ages” (CD 21,17). These are doctrines that the Church has rejected (*ep.* 169,4,43). Augustine, as I have mentioned, does not take into account that Origen did not in the least hypothesise an infinite succession of aeons. It is likely that he was basing himself on Orosius’s anti-Origenistic account in his *Com-monorium*—which focussed on the duration of infernal punishments and apokatastasis<sup>40</sup>—when in CD 21,17.23 he observed that Origen *iure culpatur* and criticised what he believed to be his protology and eschatology.<sup>41</sup> Augustine now wanted to support the eternity of infernal torments and to refute what he deemed a “Platonic” and Origenian error: that of viewing infernal pains as therapeutic, purifying, and limited in duration. He did not know, or perhaps he intentionally ignored, that Plato did *not* maintain universal apokatastasis and that Origen had to correct him in this respect.<sup>42</sup> Yet, the very idea of the opposition between the City of God and the earthly city, the former characterised by *amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui* (where lies the key of the knowledge of God, which is instead precluded on the intellectual plane<sup>43</sup>) and the latter by *amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei*, was anticipated by Origen himself, who in *Hom. in Ies. Nav.* 7.1 drew an opposition between the City of God and the City of pride. The walls of the latter are made by “the impious’ dogmas and philosophers’ false syllogisms,” diabolical structures built by the devil in human souls (*ibid.* 13,4).

<sup>40</sup> PL 31,1211–1216 = CSEL 18,151–157, in which he also presented Origen’s supposed doctrine of the creation of this world as a place of expiation. On Orosius as a historiographer and his relation to Augustine I limit myself to referring to A. Mehl, *Römische Geschichtsschreibung* (Stuttgart, 2001) = *Roman Historiography* (Chichester–Malden, MA, 2011), 229–237, who also contrasts Orosius’s optimistic philosophy of history with Augustine’s.

<sup>41</sup> G.S. Gasparro, “Agostino di fronte alla ‘eterodossia’ di Origene: un aspetto della questione origeniana in Occidente,” *Augustiniana* 40 (1991) 219–243 = Eadem, *Origene e la tradizione*, 123–150.

<sup>42</sup> See my “The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception in Platonism, Pagan and Christian: Origen in Dialogue with the Stoics and Plato,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18,3 (2011) 335–371.

<sup>43</sup> See on this point P. van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God: Augustine as a Negative Theologian* (Leuven, 2011), *praes.* Ch. 5.

In his *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, which stems from 429/30 CE, Augustine, who was accused of predestinationism himself due to his doctrine of grace, wanted to turn this accusation against the Origenians;<sup>44</sup> this is why he claimed that an infinite series of recurrent aeons eliminates human freedom; likewise, universal restoration contradicts divine justice. Thus, Origen was now accused of determinism and predestinationism, while he had never ceased refuting “Gnostic” (especially Valentinian) determinism and predestinationism, especially because of his own concern for theodicy; precisely from this polemic his philosophy of history and apokatastasis arose. Augustine was unaware of all this—which did not escape Rufinus<sup>45</sup>—or did not take this into consideration. He did not realise, either here or in the previous works I have mentioned, that Origen’s aeons were very different from the Stoics’ aeons; they were not all alike and governed by necessity, nor did they constitute a series without end, but they were conceived as the result and the “school” of the freedom of rational creatures, and constituted a limited series, oriented to the *telos*; after these aeons, the *telos* itself, i.e. the eventual apokatastasis, would come. This, in Origen’s view, will not in the least contradict divine justice, as Augustine maintains, since justice will find its expression in purifying torments that will be commensurate with the sinners’ sins and, as such, will have a measure and an end. Only after the satisfaction of justice will the eventual apokatastasis come, which will be a gift of God’s grace and, as such, will have no measure and no end. Origen was very clear on this point especially in his Commentary on Romans, but Augustine, if he indeed read it many years earlier, meanwhile had forgotten it, or, once again, he simply did not take it into account.

However, even after abandoning the doctrine of apokatastasis himself, Augustine very interestingly recognised that a great deal of Christians in his day did embrace it, “indeed the vast majority” (*immo quam plurimi*). These very numerous Christians, “albeit not denying the Holy Scripture, do not believe in eternal torments” (*Ench. ad Laur.* 29). During the very last years of his life, Augustine wrote his *Retractationes*, which he left unfinished at his death. At that time, he could no longer subscribe to the doctrine of apokatastasis, which he had embraced in the years of his anti-Manichaean polemic. This is why in *Retr.* 1.7,6 he endeavoured to explain that his statement in *De moribus* ought not to be interpreted in an Origenian sense:

<sup>44</sup> See V. Grossi, “Il termine *praedestinatio* tra il 420 e il 435,” *Augustinianum* 25 (1985) 27–64. On Augustine’s being accused of predestinationism Id., “La ricezione agostiniana della predestinazione. Difficoltà antiche e moderne,” *Augustinianum* 49 (2009) 191–221.

<sup>45</sup> See my “Origen, Patristic Philosophy.”

Non sic accipiendum est, tanquam omnia recurrant ad id unde defecerunt sicut Origeni visum est [...] non enim recurrunt ad Deum a quo defecerunt, qui sempiterno igne punientur.

In the last years of his life, when he was composing his *Retractationes*, Augustine was worried about being charged of “Origenism.” Indeed, in the very same *Retractationes* he clearly indicated that his views had changed also regarding another key issue in the Origenist controversy: the resurrected body, which he did no longer consider to be spiritual if not nominally (*Retr.* 1,16; 2,29; *Ench.* 23,91; *CD* 13,20; 22,21). Such changes seem to have occurred for many reasons, but principally because meanwhile Augustine was misinformed about Origen’s thought, the Origenist controversy had exploded again, and Augustine himself had engaged with vehemence in the anti-Pelagian controversy.<sup>46</sup> A similar shift occurred in Augustine’s interpretation of a passage that is relevant to apokatastasis: 1 Tim 2:4 (God “wants all humans to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth”). After the conflict with the Pelagians, Augustine drastically reduced the strong universalistic drift of this passage by taking “all humans” to mean, not “all humans” in fact, but only those predestined.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, in *Ep.* 149 Augustine interprets Rom 11 by observing that the *plenitudo gentium* that will be saved together with *omnis Israel* is not in fact the totality of the gentiles, but the part of them that is called by God; and *omnis Israel* is not in fact all of Israel, i.e. all the Israelites, but the spiritual Israel, i.e. the Jews and the gentiles who are chosen by God.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> This is one of the main factors of transformation in a thought that did keep elements of continuity. See C. Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology. An Argument for Continuity* (Oxford, 2006), with the reviews by V. Drecoll, *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 202–210; A. Dupont, “Continuity or Discontinuity in Augustine? Is There an ‘Early Augustine’ and What Does He Think on Grace?” *Ars disputandi* 8 (2008) 67–79. For Augustine’s changing attitude toward the disciplines and philosophy see at least *Augustine and the Disciplines: From Cassiciacum to Confessions*, eds. K. Pollmann–M. Vessey (Oxford, 2005), and G.P. Boersma “‘Exquisite and Precious Vessels’: Doctrina in Book I of Augustine’s *Confessions*,” *Augustiniana* 61 (2011) 187–206, who confirms Michael Robert’s conclusion that Augustine valued secular learning according to the principle of *utilitas* (*The Jeweled Style* [Ithaca, 1989], 127).

<sup>47</sup> See A.Y. Hwang, “Augustine’s Interpretations of 1 Tim. 2:4 in the Context of his Developing Views of Grace,” in *Studia Patristica* 43, ed. F. Young–M. Edwards–P. Parvis (Leuven, 2006), 137–142.

<sup>48</sup> For another example of the transformation of Augustine’s exegesis under the effect of the Pelagian controversy see R. Dodaro, “*Ego miser homo*: Augustine, the Pelagian Controversy, and the Paul of Romans 7:7–25,” *Augustinianum* 44 (2004) 135–144. More generally on Augustine’s polemic with Pelagianism, within a very abundant literature, see F. Mali, “Pelagius and Augustine: More than a Doctrinal Controversy,” *Augustiniana* 60 (2010) 9–10; W. Löhr, “Augustinus und sein Verhältnis zu Pelagius,” *ibid.* 63–86.

Indeed, the factor of the anti-Pelagian polemic seems to have been crucial. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, during the spread of the so-called Pelagianism, hostility against Origen was increased by the ungrounded conviction, shared by both Augustine and Jerome (significantly, the latter after changing his mind about Origen), that Pelagianism was inspired by Origen. The main reason for supposing this dependence seems to have been the assumption that Origen, like the Pelagians afterwards, denied the original sin and/or its effects. However, apart from the fact that Origen speaks a great deal of the original fall of rational creatures, expressly referring to both Adam's and Satan's fall, precisely the doctrine of apokatastasis shows that the thesis of the dependence of Pelagianism on Origen cannot stand. For it is true that the Pelagians, like Origen, denied any form of predestination of humans to salvation or damnation, but Pelagianism, just as Rufinus the Syrian who is regarded as its precursor, did not profess universal restoration. Pelagius himself in *Comm. in Rom.* 5,15 states that, if Adam's sin passed on to all humans, even to those who do not sin personally, then Christ's "being just" should save all human beings, even those who have no faith. While both of these theses are definitely rejected by Pelagius, this is exactly what Origen thought, with the sole difference that, according to Origen, all will be saved in the end in that all will have acquired faith by then.

Another reason, again related to Origen's soteriology, for excluding that Origen was the inspirer of the Pelagians is that in his view the grace of God is indispensable to salvation: eternal life is a gift of God; apokatastasis is a gratuitous gift, and precisely because it is gratuitous, unlike punishments, it has nothing to do with one's deserts and this is why it will have no measure and no end. Origen's doctrine that divine grace is indispensable to human salvation is the perfect contrary of the Pelagian doctrine.<sup>49</sup> Augustine himself was convinced, like Origen, that divine grace is necessary for humans to be saved, but from his point of view God's grace is destined to only a group

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<sup>49</sup> Pelagius was convinced that, after being baptised, Christians have the capacity to avoid sin: this is why, unlike Origen, he thought that eternal damnation awaits sinners. He deemed "Origenistic" the doctrine according to which at least Christian sinners will eventually be saved (*ap. Aug. De gestis Pel.* 3,10). He argued that God would be partial, if he granted grace to some individuals independently of their deserts (Anon. *De indur.* 13; cf. 19; Julian of Aeclanum *Libellus fidei* 23). On Pelagius's Christology, which also sensibly differs from Origen's, see at least A. Dupont, "Die Christusfigur des Pelagius," *Augustiniana* 56 (2006) 321–372; Id., "The Christology of Pre-Controversial Pelagius," *Augustiniana* 58 (2008) 235–257.



of human beings out of a *massa damnationis*,<sup>50</sup> while Origen thought it to apply to all human beings, in addition to all other rational creatures.

Theologians who, unlike those I shall treat afterwards, did not stick to Origen's solution to the core question of theodicy necessarily had to work out a different solution. Historically, as I have outlined in Ch. 3, two alternative solutions were proposed: either that of Pelagianism (which, indeed, aimed at contrasting determinism, especially Manichaean and astrological determinism) or that of Augustine. Jerome in his later, anti-Origenistic phase, expresses very well this alternative in *Dial. c. Pel.* 3,19, when, addressing the Pelagians, he states that, if they reject the doctrine of the extension of the original sin to all humans, they should go back to Origen's theory, which he—personally refusing the Pelagian solution as well as that of Origen by then—regarded as the only alternative to Augustine's theodicy and soteriology. Pelagianism denied the universal effects of original sin and the necessity of divine grace, while Augustine affirmed both. Were these two solutions to the theodicy problem better than Origen's? Not all Christian theologians thought so.

*The Reaction to a Radicalised Augustine, the Identity of "Cassian,"  
and the Heritage of Origen's Theodicy*

In the Latin West, Apponius, who authored a commentary on the Song of Songs, seems to have been an Origenian; the so-called "Luciferians" Faustinus and Marcellinus in the *Libellus precum* attest to the existence of Ori-

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<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, a position that is opposite to Augustine's on this point will be held centuries later by the contemporary American theologian Neal Punt, from a reformed Evangelical background, a supporter of "Biblical universalism." See N. Punt, *Unconditional Good News* (Grand Rapids, 1980); Idem, *What's Good About the Good News? The Plan of Salvation in a New Light* (Chicago, 1988); Idem, *So Also in Christ: Reviewing the Plan of Salvation* (Chicago, 2002). His thesis is the opposite of Augustine's: all human beings are elect in Christ, apart from those whom the Bible declares to be lost, namely those who consciously, willingly, and obstinately refuse the revelation that the Godhead offers of itself in the Gospel, in creation, or in one's conscience (Punt, *Also in Christ*, 83; 60–61). Punt's view, unlike Augustine's, is that humanity is not a *massa damnationis* unable even to do good on account of the original sin, from which some are saved by grace; it is rather that all are predestined to inherit the Kingdom, unless they fail because of their sin, if this is voluntary and obstinate. Punt cites 1 Cor 6:9–10; Ap 22:15. Cf. Punt, *What's Good*, 3–4; Idem, *Also in Christ*, 83. D. Hilborn–D. Horrocks, "Universalistic Trends in the Evangelical Tradition," in *Universal Salvation? The Current Debate*, eds. R. Parry–C. Partridge (Carlisle, 2003), 219–244, *praes.* 234, observe that, if for Punt salvation is a gift of grace, then in the case of those who definitively reject God one should suppose either that God's grace is ineffective, or that God actively keeps it away from these people. Either alternative is absurd.

*genistae* in the Latin West in their day. Maximus of Turin († 408/426)<sup>51</sup> seems to have embraced a limited universal salvation, an apokatastasis involving all Christians and restricted to them. This is suggested by *Serm.* 19,3, in which he explains that only those who have received the grace of Christ will go to heaven, and more clearly in *Serm.* 22a, 3, in which Maximus maintains that all the baptised (and only they) will escape the fire of Gehenna. A more universalistic trait seems to emerge from his *Serm. in Pent.* 2, in which he claims that Christ snatches humanity from the jaws of hell and carries it to heaven.

According to the most widespread portrait of his historical figure, John Cassian (360–430/435 ca) received his formation in Palestine and in Egypt, among the Evagrian monks of the Egyptian desert who preserved the Origenian tradition—indeed, he constitutes a good source on Egyptian monasticism—, then he ended up in Gaul, close to Marseilles, in 415 CE, where he founded two monasteries, although his actual connection with Marseilles has been questioned by Goodrich.<sup>52</sup> Now Panayiotis Tzamalikos<sup>53</sup> argues, on the basis of noteworthy elements, that another Cassian (475 ca.–548) must be distinguished from John Cassian and that the texts ascribed to the latter are largely the product of extrapolation and forgery. John Cassian surely wrote a *De incarnatione contra Nestorium*, in Latin, but the other works ascribed to him were mostly, in their origin, Greek works by the other Cassian, the Sabaite. Tzamalikos thinks that Gennadius of Marseilles' portrait of

<sup>51</sup> On whom see at least A. Merkt, *Maximus I. von Turin. Die Verkündigung eines Bischofs der frühen Reichskirche im zeitgeschichtlichen, gesellschaftlichen und liturgischen Kontext*, *Vigiliae Christianae Suppl.* 40 (Leiden, 1997), with my review in *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia* 53 (1999) 541–546.

<sup>52</sup> R.J. Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian* (Oxford, 2007), observes that there were no monasteries in the West organised around Cassian's *Institutiones*, not even Lérins in fact. On the passage of ascetic ideals from the Egyptian desert to the West especially with Cassian, see Ph. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Notre Dame, Ind. 2010<sup>2</sup>), *praes.* 169–234 on Cassian; see also the new Additional Bibliography on xxvii–xxxvi and a new Introduction on ix–xxvi and G.E. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* (Notre Dame, Ind. 2007), who devotes a long section to Cassian. On spiritual guidance in Cassian see R. Alciati, “*Sub seniorum imperio*. La direzione spirituale secondo Cassiano,” in *Direzione spirituale e agiografia*, ed. M. Catto–I. Gagliardi–R.M. Parrinello (Alessandria, 2008), 67–95.

<sup>53</sup> In *The Real Cassian Revisited: Monastic Life, Greek Paideia, and Origenism in the Sixth Century* (Leiden, 2012), a monograph which goes together with the publication of Cassian's texts in ninth-century Codex 573, Monastery of Metamorphosis, Meteora, Greece: foll. 1r–118v in *A Newly Discovered Greek Father: Cassian the Sabaite, Eclipsed by John Cassian of Marseilles* (Leiden, 2012); foll. 210v–290r in *An Ancient Commentary on the Book of Revelation: A Critical Edition of the Scholia in Apocalypsin* (forthcoming).

Cassian in *De viris illustribus* 62 (PL 49,46D–47A) has been tampered with<sup>54</sup> and that Castor, the dedicatee of Cassian's *Institutiones*, may not have been the bishop of Apt, all the more so in that the letter in which Castor asks "John Cassian" to write down the rules of monasteries in Egypt and the East is a forgery. He also observes that biographies which represent fifth-century ecclesiastical authors such as Fulgentius or Caesarius of Arelate as fascinated by the Latin Cassian's *Institutiones* and *Collationes* are too late to have any historical value. The Cassian whose figure is retrieved by Tzamalikos under the name of Cassian the Sabaite was a very learned monk who was born in Scythopolis in Palestine around 470–475 CE, the abbot of the Laura of Sabas, and the fourth successor of St. Sabas himself, elected when the Origenists prevailed in the monastery. At about forty, Cassian followed Sabas to Constantinople, in 511–512 CE, and in the course of his life he spent time in Scetis and the Egyptian desert. In 515 CE he must have written works on the rules of the monasteries in Egypt and the East and on the eight dispositions to evil, dedicated to bishop Castor who had requested him to write them. Precisely because of his real or supposed "Origenism" he underwent a kind of *damnatio memoriae*, so that his works were ascribed to others. He was a contemporary of Leontius of Byzantium († 542), a prudent Origenian,<sup>55</sup> expelled from the New Laura in 514 CE by abbot Agapetus precisely on account of his adherence to the doctrines of Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius, as is attested by Cyril of Scythopolis (*V. Sab.* 36; 72: 74; 83–87; *V. Cyr.* 11; 13–14). It is for Leontius that Cassian wrote the *Collationes*. Cassian the Sabaite can be identified with the "monk Cassian the Roman" (i.e., belonging to the Roman empire) of whom Photius speaks in *Bibl. cod.* 197. The Greek scholar hypothesises that this Cassian was the author of the *Scholia in Apocalypsin* ascribed to Origen

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<sup>54</sup> This is the passage in which Cassian is presented as *natione Scythia* and as a *presbyter apud Massiliam*, as well as the founder of two monasteries, one for men and one for women. Besides the *Institutiones* and the *Collationes*, the Gennadius passage ascribes to Cassian many other works, among which that on the eight capital sins, others on prayer, and seven books on the Incarnation against Nestorius. The entry ends with the death of Cassian *apud Massiliam* under Theodosius and Valentinianus. According to Tzamalikos, *The Real Cassian*, Gennadius's entry ascribes to Cassian the Scythian not only his own works, if any, but also works of Cassian the Sabaite, such as *On Discretion*, *On the Eight Dispositions to Evil*, and on the rules of the *coenobia* in Egypt and the East.

<sup>55</sup> See at least M. Richard, "Léonce de Bysance était-il origéniste?" *Revue des Études Byzantines* 5 (1947) 31–66; Beatrice, "Origen in Nemesius," 517. On his soteriology: M. Dowling, "Incarnation and Salvation in Leontius of Byzantium," in *Salvation According to the Fathers of the Church*, eds. V. Twomey–D. Krausmüller (Dublin, 2010), 93–107. After 543 Leontius probably felt the need to protest his "orthodoxy" and display a distance from Origenism—whatever this was supposed to be at that point in time.

and of the anonymous *De Trinitate* once attributed to Didymus the Blind. Cassian the Sabaite relied on the Origenian and the Antiochian traditions (the latter, as I have shown,<sup>56</sup> had in fact much in common with Origen, for instance from the eschatological point of view): Origen, Eusebius, Didymus, Gregory Nyssen, but also Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret.

Cassian the Sabaite and the author of the *Conlationes* (which partially may go back to the Sabaite, in Greek, and partially may include additions in Latin) had a strong Origenian intellectual background and absorbed Origen's thought especially through Evagrius. As Dominic Keech puts it, the author of the *Conlationes* is "the conscious inheritor of Origen and Evagrius."<sup>57</sup> The latter was highly influential upon the author of the *Conlationes*, who is considered to have spread Evagrius's thought into the West. It is probable that, if Cassian does not mention Evagrius, it is for the sake of prudence.<sup>58</sup> When the festal letter of 399 CE reached Scetis, Cassian was there, as he attests in *Conl.* 10,2. He was ordained a deacon few years later in Constantinople, where he enjoyed the protection of John Chrysostom; then he was ordained a presbyter in Rome. He also participated in a delegation from Constantinople to pope Innocentius to support Chrysostom, who had been exiled for giving hospitality to the Origenian monks expelled by Theophilus from Egypt. In Rome, Cassian was hosted by Melania the Younger and her husband, Pinianus, who both belonged to the Origenian "party" and were friends with Rufinus.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> See above, Ch. 3, the sections on Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia.

<sup>57</sup> Keech, "John Cassian and the Christology," 281.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. C. Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (Oxford, 1998), *praes.* 11–12; A. Casiday, "Deification in Origen, Evagrius, and Cassian," in *Origeniana VIII*, 995 ff.; see also S. Marsili, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico* (Rome, 1936); H.O. Weber, *Die Stellung des Iohannes Cassianus zur ausser-pachomianischen Mönchstradition* (Münster, 1961); C. Tibiletti, "G. Cassiano: formazione e dottrina," *Augustinianum* 17 (1977) 355–380; A. de Vogüé, "Les sources des quatre premiers livres des *Institutions* de Jean Cassien," *Studia Monastica* 27 (1985) 241–311; Goodrich, *Contextualizing Cassian*. For Origen's influence on Western monasticism see G. Bostock, "The Influence of Origen on Pelagius and Western Monasticism," in *Origeniana VII*, 381 ff. On the culture and book production of these circles see Ch. Kotsifou, "Books and Book Production in the Monastic Communities of Byzantine Egypt," in *The Early Christian Book*, eds. W.E. Klingshirn–L. Safran (Washington, 2007), 54–66. On Egyptian monasticism, with focus on social, more than theological, aspects, see E. Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe–VIIIe siècles)* (Varsovie, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> Palladius *HL.* 61. See above, ch. 3, the discussion of Jerome and Rufinus, and the reference to Clark's investigation into the Origenian and anti-Origenian "parties" and their important role in the Origenistic controversy.

Cassian is not only a master of spirituality, but also a good theologian. The spiritual and ascetic aspect of Evagrius's *πρακτική* is closely related to theological *θεωρία* in Cassian's view. Origen's theological influence is also reflected in Cassian's doctrine on the salvific value of incarnation.<sup>60</sup> From mid fifth century onwards, his thought has been the object of suspicion, because of the label of "semi-Pelagianism."<sup>61</sup> This accusation was first due to Prosperus of Aquitania, who distorted his thought concerning grace and free will.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Prosperus's *De gratia Dei et libero arbitrio contra Collatorem* bristles with wrong quotations from Cassian, or with quotations from his works that are completely cut off their context. This, besides supporting indirectly Tzamalikos's hypothesis concerning Cassian, reminds me of the quotations from Origen that his accusers adduced in the so-called Origenistic controversy. Semi-Pelagianism was condemned at the local Council of Orange in 529 CE. In fact, Cassian's thought is far removed from Pelagianism. In particular, his anthropology, his Christology, and his theology of grace are simply incompatible with Pelagius's doctrine and are rather in line with the Origenian thought. The controversy between his monks, the *Massilienses*, and Augustine revolved around a harshening of the latter's doctrine of grace that in the monks' view risked to destroy any personal responsibility.<sup>63</sup>

Indeed, the influence of Evagrius, rather than a supposed influence of Pelagius, is evident in Cassian's *Institutiones* or *De institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium vitiorum remediis*, an ascetic work containing monastic norms and reflections on vices and their remedies. In the Meteoron Codex 573 edited by P. Tzamalikos, a manuscript which contains what is entitled "the Book of Cassian," the *Institutiones* are present in Greek, as a double work: *Περὶ διατυπώσεως καὶ κανόνων τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀνατολὴν καὶ Αἰγυπτου*

<sup>60</sup> On Cassian's *De Incarnatione* see D. Maxwell, "The Christological Coherence in Cassian's *On the Incarnation of the Lord*," in *Studia Patristica* LXIII (Leuven, 2006), V, 429–434; L. Mirri, "Elementi teologici nel *De Incarnatione* di Cassiano," *ibid.* 435–440.

<sup>61</sup> Against this label see, e.g., *Jean Cassien entre l'orient et l'occident*, ed. C. Badilita–A. Jakab (Paris, 2003), and A. Hwang, *Intrepid Lover of Perfect Grace: The Life and Thought of Prosper of Aquitaine* (Washington, 2009), who replaces this label with the expression *doctores Gallicani*.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. A. Casiday, "Rehabilitating John Cassian: An Evaluation of Prosper of Aquitaine's Polemic against the 'Semipelagians,'" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58,3 (2005) 270–284; R. Villegas Marín, "En polémica con Julián de Eclanum: por una nueva lectura del *Syllabus de gratia* de Próspero de Aquitania," *Augustinianum* 43 (2003) 81–124 argues that the *Syllabus* is better understood in the framework of the debate between Augustine and Julian of Aecclanum, rather than in that of the so-called semi-Pelagian controversy of Southern Gaul.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. especially D. Ogliari, *Gratia et certamen. The Relationship between Grace and Free Will in the Discussion of Augustine with the So-Called Semipelagians* (Leuven, 2003).

κοινοβίων and Περὶ τῶν ἡ' λογισμῶν, which are followed by three conferences, inspired by Plato's dialogues and written in a sophisticated language redolent of Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, Evagrius, Didymus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and other authors. Tzamalikos, also on the basis of many Greek technical terms and Greek quotations found in the Latin *Institutiones*, maintains that the Greek text of the *Institutiones* is not a translation from the Latin, but the original text, written by Cassian the Sabaite.

But the work that is most relevant to the present investigation is Cassian's *Collationes*, 24 in number, at least in the Latin recension, which Tzamalikos, like Chadwick, regards as heavily interpolated, as well as the Latin text of the *Institutiones*. These are structured as *quaestiones et responsiones*, the latter coming from Egyptian hermits.<sup>64</sup> Cassian's ascetic doctrine depends on Origen and Evagrius. Spiritual progress proceeds from the renunciation of exterior and apparent goods, of passions, and of any attention to the present world, which must be replaced by virtues, ascetic activities (prayer, meditation of Scripture, fasting, etc.), and tension toward the other world. Ascetic activities lead to a state of contemplation which is perfect, in that it consists in the adhesion to God in love and prayer, and anticipates the otherworldly fullness.

Cassian shows his closeness to Origenian theodicy and his remoteness from Augustine's doctrine of grace—or better, according to Casiday,<sup>65</sup> from a radicalised and partially even misunderstood Augustinianism—in *Collatio* 13, one of the *Collationes* from which accusations of “semi-Pelagianism” arose, along with *Coll.* 3 and 5. This *Collatio* seems to reflect the climate of the debate against Augustinian predestinationism; it is not one of those which go back to the Sabaite on Tzamalikos's hypothesis; Prosper does not seem to know *Collatio* 13, which may be a later addition. According to the author of Latin *Collatio* 13, God does not predestine few people to salvation from the beginning in a gratuitous way. In this refutation of what he perceived as Augustinian predestinationism—but he *never* criticises Augustine by name—Cassian is close to Vincent of Lérins, who, in his *Commonitorium* (434 CE), contrasts Augustinian predestinationism. Cassian insists that it is human free will that must choose the Good, and God's grace supports this

<sup>64</sup> B. Ramsay, *Cassian* (New York, 1997) provides a short introduction and complete translation of the *Collationes*. All translations here, as in the rest of this monograph, unless otherwise stated, are mine.

<sup>65</sup> A.M.C. Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St John Cassian* (Oxford, 2007), esp. Ch. 1. On *Conl.* 13 see also D. Ogliari, “The Conciliation of Grace and Free Will,” *Augustiniana* 50 (2000) 141–173.

choice and brings it to success. Cassian follows Origen's and Evagrius's soteriology when he maintains that, even when human free will embraces evil, divine grace reorients it toward the Good. In the aforementioned *Collatio* 13, indeed, already in ch. 3 abbot Chaeremon declares that a human, even virtuous, without God's assistance can achieve nothing.<sup>66</sup> Even human free will is oriented toward the Good by God's grace: "The initiative, not only of our actions, but also of our thoughts, *comes from God*, who inspires us with good will to begin, and offers us the opportunity to achieve what we rightly wish, because 'every good endowment, every perfect gift comes from on high, from the Father of lights.'"<sup>67</sup>

Chapter 7 is particularly relevant to the present research; it rejects the theory of divine grace as limited to some predestined persons:

The intention that God had when he created the human being, not that this should die, but that it might *live forever*, remains unchanged. And when *God's goodness* sees even the most tiny sparkle of good will shine in us, a sparkle that *it was God to draw from our hearts*, the Godhead cherishes and encourages it, and endeavours to make it grow, and nourishes it with its bread. For *God wants all human beings to be saved and to reach the knowledge of truth*. Indeed, he says: Your Father, who is in heaven, does not want any of these little ones to be lost, and again: *God does not want to have any soul lost, and rather calls it back*. In this way he demonstrates that *even the one who has gone far* (from God) *will not perish altogether* [...] Because I live, the Lord says, *I do not want the death of the sinner, but I want him to convert and live*.

It is notable that for Cassian, just as for Origen and—as I have demonstrated—Augustine in his anti-Manichaean phase, it is God's goodness, *Dei bonitas*, that is at the roots of God's universal salvific will and of the whole economy of salvation. This economy cannot, for Cassian, include the predestination of some people to beatitude and not of others:

If God does not want any of these little ones to perish, how could we even imagine without *grave blasphemy* that *God does not want all humans to be saved, but only some instead of all?* Should some perish, these would perish *against God's will*.

<sup>66</sup> "The efforts of those who work can nothing without the help of God [...] human pride should never place itself at the level of God's grace." See also Stewart, *Cassian The Monk*, 76–80 on divine grace and human will.

<sup>67</sup> James 1:17. In ch. 6 Chaeremon insists that "human weakness by itself, that is, without God's help, cannot attain anything that is related to salvation. This is why God told Paul: '*My grace is enough* for you, because my power is realised in weakness.'" On this Pauline passage and Origen's interpretation see my "Disability in Bardaisan and Origen: Between the Stoic *Adiaphora* and the Lord's Grace," lecture at the Conference *Gestörte Lektüre*, Universität Koblenz-Landau, 18–20.V.2011, in *Gestörte Lektüre. Disability als hermeneutische Leitkategorie biblischer Exegese*, Hrsg. W. Grünstäudl–M. Schiefer (Stuttgart, 2012), 141–159.

Cassian cites Jesus's words to Jerusalem, that he wished to gather her children "just as a hen gathers her tiny chicks under her wings." Christ's grace, therefore, "is *always* available, that which wants *all humans to be saved and reach the knowledge of truth*." Christ's grace "calls *everyone* without exception [...] God has not created death and does not rejoice in the destruction of any living being." In this connection, at the end of Chapter 7, Cassian introduces the *epinoia* of Christ as Healer and Physician, which was dear to Clement and Origen and was used by them in support of apokatastasis:

Like an extremely benevolent physician, for our own sake he will bring us what is opposite to our will, and sometimes delays and prevents our *evil intentions and deadly attempts*, that they *may not have their horrible effect*, and while we rush toward death, he *pulls us back toward salvation*, and, while we are unaware of this, he *saves us from hell's jaws*.

According to Cassian, God helps human free will when it is good, and if it is not good it turns it toward the Good. It seems that for him, just as for Origen, human free will is not an impediment to God in reaching his goal, that is, the salvation of all. Origen, indeed, observed that if not even death or the powers of evil will be able to separate humans from God's love, human free will shall even less be able to do so.<sup>68</sup>

Cassian develops this notion in Chapter 8 together with that of the immense love of God for the human being, which has divine Providence not only follow human free will, but even precede it: "God's goodness and love, *which he always demonstrates to humanity* (for he is never hindered by any offence that may have him desist from seeking our salvation or deviate from his first intention, as though our iniquities could have him desist!), could not be described in a more appropriate way with any other simile than that of a man inflamed by the most ardent love for a woman, consumed by a passion that is all the more burning, the more he realises that he is despised by her. The Creator's benevolence for the creatures is so great that *his Providence not only follows our will, but even precedes it* [...] And when God sees in us a commencement of good will, God immediately illuminates and fortifies it and has it proceed more quickly toward salvation [...] And *in his goodness* God does not only inspire us with good wishes, but *even creates occasions* for our lives and opportunities for our good outcomes, and to those who are in error shows the way of salvation." Cassian insists that God's grace helps those who show even the tiniest inclination toward the Good, and leads to the Good, against their will, those who are inclined toward evil (ch. 9):

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<sup>68</sup> See above, Ch. 1, the part on Origen.



Human reason cannot easily determine in what sense the Lord “gives to those who ask for,” “is easily found by those who look for him,” and “opens to those who knock,” whereas on the other hand God *is found by those who were not looking for him, openly appears among those who had not requested this, and always stretches his arms toward those who do not believe and reject him, calls those who resist him* and are very far from him, *drags humans to salvation against their own will [...]* in his goodness he prevents those who are falling headlong toward evilness.

God’s *bonitas* is again indicated as the agent of the salvation process. After adducing scriptural quotations, Cassian concludes that “in all these assertions there is a declaration both of God’s grace and of the freedom of our will, so that, although we turn to the Good, we cannot reach the perfect accomplishment without the grace of God.” In ch. 10, however, Cassian underlines much more the weakness of our free will and the necessity of divine help: “It is God who provides that you both want and do what God wants.”

Cassian, however, does not avoid the following question: is it the Godhead who gives us its grace because it has seen a principle of good will in us, or this same good will arises in us exclusively by God’s grace? (ch. 11) Cassian’s solution is a conciliation, just as it was that of Origen and Nyssen (who saw the conciliation of grace and free will in the whole course of the history of salvation and especially in the *telos*, when all will adhere to the Good voluntarily, but thanks to a purification operated essentially by Christ): “These two elements, God’s grace and free will, seem to be opposed to one another, but in fact they are in *harmony*, and from the system of goodness we infer that we ought to have them in equal measure [...] because, when God sees us inclined to want what is good, *he favours, leads, and fortifies* us [...], while, if he finds us lazy and cold, he *moves our hearts* with healthy exhortations, *by which good will is either renewed or formed in us.*” For Cassian is convinced that in every soul

there are *seeds of Good* planted by the Creator’s kindness, *but if they are not assisted by God, they cannot grow* toward perfection [...] *God’s grace always collaborates with our will* for the latter’s sake, and assists, protects, and defends it in everything [...] *God’s grace continues to be gratuitous*, in that, in exchange for small efforts, with inestimable generosity it gives us *such a glory of immortality, and such gifts of eternal beatitude.*

The “seeds of Good” of which Cassian speaks here closely remind me of Evagrius’s affirmation that “the seeds of virtue are impossible to destroy” (KG 1,40), in a *kephalaion* in which he is arguing for the ontological, axiological and even chronological priority of Good over evil and of virtue over

evilness. Evagrius, as I have argued, based on this his doctrine of apokatastasis.<sup>69</sup>

According to Cassian, divine grace is dispensed by God's providence out of God's infinite love for every human: just like a loving nurse, and even more, "the heavenly Father of all knows whom to carry in the bosom of his grace, whom to train to be virtuous before him, with the practice of free will, and at the same time *helps this person* in her efforts, listens to this person when she calls him, *never abandons* this person when she looks for him, and often pulls her away from danger *even without her notice*" (ch. 14). In Cassian's view, this clearly demonstrates that "God's judgments are impossible to understand and God's ways are incomprehensible, that is, those ways through which *God draws humanity to salvation*" (ch. 15). Cassian denies that either one's faith or one's deeds can be sufficient for one's salvation and affirms the preeminence of God's grace. On this point, he is in fact in line with Augustine, but he, just like Origen, disagrees with him on the *extension* of God's grace, which in his view is not limited to some, as Augustine maintained, but extends to all (as Origen and Nyssen thought): "On the contrary [sc. contrary to the doctrine of justification by faith], we affirm our thesis overtly and unconditionally: *God's grace is superabundant, and often overcomes the restricted limits of a person's lack of faith*" (ch. 16). This thesis is further developed in Chapters 17–18, in which arguments already presented appear again and are reinforced:

God *brings salvation to humanity in various and infinite ways* [...] also *forcing* people who resist him, *even against their will*. Sometimes God provides assistance for the accomplishment of what he sees that we wish for our good, *some other times he puts in us the very principle of the good wish, granting us both the beginning of good works and perseverance in them* [...] *It is God who first calls us to himself* and, while we are still ignorant and unwilling, *leads us to salvation*.

Cassian concludes that nobody can understand or exhaustively treat "the economy of God, with which he *operates the salvation of humanity*." God's love and providence are compared by Cassian, along the lines of Scripture, to a mother's love for her baby, and are declared to be even stronger than this love: even if a mother could ever forget her child, God, who is Mother (as Clement and Gregory of Nyssa also stressed), will never forget his creatures. The point that God's grace is directed to all instead of a limited number of people—the main respect in which, as I have argued, Cassian's doctrine is different from that of Augustine and comes close to that of Origen—is reaffirmed in Chapter 18:

<sup>69</sup> See above, ch. 3, section on Evagrius.

God, the Father of all, works indifferently *all in all*, as the apostle says, like an *extremely good father and an extremely benevolent physician*. Now he *places in us the germs of salvation and offers zeal to each one in his free will*, now he guarantees the success of our work and the perfection of goodness; now he *saves people, even against their will and without their own notice*, from an imminent ruin and a headlong fall [...] now he *offers them the opportunity to be saved* and drives them away from intentions that would bring them to death. He assists those who want and are already running, and *drags along those who do not want and withstand, and compels them to want the Good* [...] That our salvation is not to be ascribed to the merits of our works, but to the heavenly grace, is taught by the words of the Lord himself: You will know that I am the Lord *when I shall have done good to you* for the sake of my Name, not according to your bad behaviours, not according to your evil deeds [...] It must be thought that *the God of all operates in all* so to exhort, protect, fortify, even *without taking away from us the freedom of will that he himself gave us*.

Even while always respecting each one's free will, in a mysterious way, for the sake of his own glory, gratuitously, God saves both those who want and those who do not want, providing that the latter, too, come to want. Cassian is in perfect agreement with Origen when he maintains that divine grace extends to all and that human free will is not a hindrance to God's universally salvific will.

#### *Further Origenian Monasticism in Gaul*

Evagrius's thought, as formulated in his *Kephalaia Gnostica*, and the Origenism of the Egyptian and Palestinian monks seems to have at least partially passed on to monasticism in Gaul in the fifth century. In the intellectual environment of Origenian monasticism in Gaul, Augustine's thought was perceived, in a probably radicalised and partially distorted way, as a predestinationism that denied both human free will and divine grace.<sup>70</sup> The first document of such an understanding seems to be the *Epistula ad Rufinum* (PL 51,77–90), which accuses Augustine of *liberum arbitrium penitus submovere et sub gratiae nomine necessitatem praedicare fatalem*. Augustine's predestinationism, especially due to what appeared a partiality in God's grace, was thought to reintroduce fatalism, which had been refuted by Origen long before in "Gnosticism," especially Valentinianism. It is probably

<sup>70</sup> On the effects of this perception see e.g. R. Villegas Marín, "Lucidus on Predestination: The Damnation of Augustine's Predestinationism in the Synods of Arles (473) and Lyons (474)," in *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010) 163–169.

from Origenian circles that, in 431–434 CE, three lists of accusations levelled against Augustine began to be circulated; they focussed on the charge, related to theodicy, of attributing all evil to God's responsibility. These lists were the *Capitula Gallorum* (PL 51,155–174), the *Obiectiones Vincentiarum* (PL 51,176–186), and the *Excerpta Genuensium* (PL 51,187–202).

Faustus of Riez († 490/495), who was a monk and an abbot at Lérins, and then bishop of Riez (Rhegium), wrote his *De gratia Dei et humanae mentis libero arbitrio* toward 475 CE.<sup>71</sup> Even though he never quotes Origen directly, he seems to have been strongly influenced by Origenian ideas, for instance in the distinction between the outer and the inner human being (*Grat.* 1,9). In *Ep.* 1 and 2 he declares that no human being can be predestined by God to damnation—such a predestinationism was represented in his day especially by the presbyter Lucidus<sup>72</sup>—and insists that Christ's death took place for the sake of absolutely all and he wants all humans to be saved: *anathema illi qui dixerit quod Christus non pro omnibus mortuus sit nec omnes homines salvos esse velit*. According to Faustus, Christ's salvific action will extend to all, not only to few predestined; his sacrifice took place for the salvation of all (*Grat.* 1,16).<sup>73</sup> Origen was convinced that Christ's sacrifice, not only took place for the salvation of all, at the level of Christ's intention, but will also produce the salvation of all: *Tantam esse vim crucis Christi et mortis huius [...] quae ad sanitatem et remedium non solum praesentis et futuri, sed etiam praeteritorum saeculorum, et non solum humano huic nostro ordini, sed etiam caelestibus virtutibus ordinibusque sufficiat* (*Comm. in Rom.* 4,10). Faustus is less explicit on this point and, unlike Origen and Nyssen, does not expressly say that apokatastasis will be universal. He limits himself to thinking that only those who will not want it will not be saved. He does not affirm that there will be someone who will refuse to be saved until the end.

Moreover, like Origen, Faustus, refusing Pelagianism—he called Pelagius himself *pestifer*—, maintains that divine grace is absolutely necessary to salvation. Without grace, *nihil sumus* (*Ep.* 1); grace must always strengthen the

<sup>71</sup> G. Weigel, *Faustus of Riez: An Historical Introduction* (Philadelphia, 1938).

<sup>72</sup> See now R. Villegas Marín, "Lucidus on Predestination," 163–167.

<sup>73</sup> See M. Simonetti, "Il *De Gratia* di Fausto di Riez," *Studi Storico-Religiosi* 1 (1977) 125–144; C. Tibiletti, "Fausto di Riez nei giudizi della critica," *Augustinianum* 21 (1981) 567–587; Th.A. Smith, *De Gratia: Faustus of Riez's Treatise on Grace and its Place in the History of Theology* (South Bend, Ind., 1990). Further documentation in R. Barcellona, *Fausto di Riez interprete del suo tempo* (Soveria Mannelli, 2006), 35–102, also with my review in *Aevum* 82 (2008) 271–272; M.L. Annecchino, "Stipendium peccati mors," *Auctores Nostri* 4 (2006) 195–209, on Faustus's exegesis of free will in the Letter to the Romans.

goods of nature (*Grat.* 2,12).<sup>74</sup> The label of “semi-Pelagianism,” often attached to him just as to Cassian and Vincent of Lérins, is in fact misleading.<sup>75</sup> For these theologians contrasted Pelagianism as well as predestinationism, and esteemed and used Augustine, albeit in a critical way and perhaps not without misunderstandings due to a radicalisation of his thought. Faustus was also a stern opponent of Arianism, against which he wrote his *De Spiritu Sancto*, just as Origen had opposed “subordinationist” trends in his time.<sup>76</sup> Faustus was even exiled because of his anti-Arianism, at a time in which the Gothic conquerors of Gaul were Arians.

Augustine’s predestinationism was opposed by Vincent of Lérins as well, who wrote his *Commonitorium* in 434. He deemed it a heresy to posit a grace of God limited to some predestined elect, without any effort of their own (*Comm.* 26). At that time, the library of the monastery of Lérins included Origen’s works in Latin, plus those of Ambrose, who was deeply influenced by Origen.<sup>77</sup> Vincent, like Cassian, knew Origen’s works and, like Origen and Augustine, supported the necessity of divine grace, through Christ, for salvation, against Pelagianism. This is particularly clear in Vincent’s *Excerpta*, which show how he built upon Augustine’s anti-Pelagian writings.<sup>78</sup>

Origen appears five times in the anonymous *Praedestinatus*. Its author<sup>79</sup> accepted and appropriated Rufinus’s thesis, which he put forward in *De adulteratione librorum Origenis*, that someone hostile interpolated Origen’s works so as to have the latter appear as a heretic. Such interpolations were lamented by Origen himself during his life. In the *Praedestinatus*, three “Origen” are individuated: one is a Syrian, a corruptor of customs; another one is

<sup>74</sup> See especially M. Djuth, “Faustus of Riez: *Initium bonae voluntatis*,” *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990) 35–53; Th. Smith, “Faustus of Riez,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, eds. A. Fitzgerald–J.C. Cavadini (Grand Rapids, 1999; new ed. 2009), 356–358.

<sup>75</sup> J.P. Weiss, “Le semi-pélagianisme se réduit-il à une réaction contre Augustin et l’augustinisme de la première génération?,” in *Atti del Congresso internazionale su s. Agostino* (Rome, 1986), 465–481; specifically on Faustus: P. Mattei, “Le fantôme semi-pélagien. Lecture du traité *De gratia* de Fauste de Riez,” *Augustiniana* 60 (2010) 87–117.

<sup>76</sup> See my “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism and its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011) 21–49. Gennadius mentions a *Libellus parvus adversus Arianos et Macedonianos* by Faustus, but this is lost.

<sup>77</sup> M. Dulaey, “La bibliothèque du monastère de Lérins dans les premières décennies du V<sup>e</sup> s.,” *Augustinianum* 46 (2006) 187–230.

<sup>78</sup> See A. Casiday, “Grace and the Humanity of Christ according to St Vincent of Lérins,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 59 (2005) 298–314; also D. Correa, “San Vicente de Lerins y San Agustín,” *Studium. Filosofía y teología* 10/20 (2007) 391–402.

<sup>79</sup> According to F. Gori, *Il Praedestinatus di Arnobio il Giovane* (Rome, 1999), this work is by Arnobius the Younger, who should therefore be listed among the representatives of the Western heritage of Origen.

a heretical Origen, adulterated by “perverse learned men,” thus not the true Origen, but an Origen who never existed, and the third is the *true* Origen, not heretical but catholic. He is defended by the anonymous author, who sided with Origen against predestinationism.<sup>80</sup> Origen fought against this doctrine as supported by Gnosticism; the anonymous author of the *Praedestinatus* does not ascribe predestinationism to Augustine in an explicit way, but he clearly had Augustine’s doctrine in mind, though in a radicalised and probably distorted form. The author attacked the doctrine of the predestination of some human beings to salvation and others to damnation on the part of God, which seemed to reintroduce a kind of determinism. The anonymous author was far from this position, but he was equally far from Pelagianism. It is meaningful that, at the end of the fifth century, the *Decretum Gelasianum* includes both Origen and Augustine—both far from Pelagianism—in the Roman church’s *magisterium*.<sup>81</sup>

To Origenian monasticism in Gaul belonged Caesarius of Arles (ca. 470–542) as well, who was first a monk at Lérins and then bishop of Arles; he wrote a fundamental set of rules for nuns (his own sister Caesaria was the abbess of a monastery), and presided over the local Council of Orange (529 CE), in which the doctrine of the predestination of some humans to evil by God was condemned, and the principle, dear to Cassian, was asserted that God’s grace initiates every good work in each one.<sup>82</sup> Caesarius extensively drew on Origen’s homilies on OT books in his own spiritual exegesis of the Bible. His methodological statement is clear: *Remoto velamine litterae vivificantem Spiritum fideliter requiramus* (*Serm.* 83,1). In *Serm.* 83 Caesarius quotes long passages from Origen’s *Hom. in Gen.* 4; likewise, in *Serm.* 85 many passages from Origen’s *Hom. in Gen.* 8 are taken over. What is more, in *Serm.* 91 for the theme of Pharaoh’s hardened heart he shows to know,

<sup>80</sup> See V. Grossi, “A proposito della presenza di Origene in *Praedestinatus*,” *Augustinianum* 26 (1986) 229–240.

<sup>81</sup> See V. Grossi, “Il Decretum Gelasianum,” *Augustinianum* 41 (2001) 231–255; Idem, “L’origenismo latino negli scritti agostiniani,” 82; C. Tibiletti, *Pagine monastiche provenzali* (Rome, 1990).

<sup>82</sup> P. Christophe, *Cassien et Césaire: prédicateurs de la morale monastique* (Gembloux–Paris, 1969); W. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles. Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool, 1994); idem, *Caesarius of Arles. The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 1994), who focuses more on biographical and historical aspects rather than on theological ones. The *Erotapokriseis* ascribed to Caesarius are spurious; for a possible cultural contextualisation see I. Perczel, “Finding a Place for the *Erotapokriseis* of Pseudo-Caesarius: A New Document of Sixth-Century Palestinian Origenism,” *ARAM* 18–19 (2006–2007), 49–83. This goes in the same direction as the recent hypotheses of P. Tzamalikos on Cassian. Tzamalikos surmises that the *Erotapokriseis* are by Cassian the Sabaite.

and uses, the third book of Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*. This is the book in which Origen, beginning from a reflection of human free will and theodicy, came to the theorisation of apokatastasis.<sup>83</sup> Caesarius, to be sure, does not mention Origen; this, however, is a sign, not of ignorance, but of circumspection.<sup>84</sup> Although he is not explicit on this point, and in his sermons repeatedly threatens otherworldly punishments, Caesarius may have supported the apokatastasis theory.

*The Syriac Heritage of Origen and Evagrius. Philoxenus and Sudhaili*

Origen exerted an enormous influence on monasticism, not only in Gaul, but above all in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, especially through Evagrius and his followers.<sup>85</sup> Between the fifth and the sixth centuries, in the Syriac world, the apokatastasis doctrine was endorsed by Philoxenus of Mabbog (†523) and Stephen Bar Sudhaili (†543 ca.), an Edessan monk. Philoxenus, an anti-Chalcedonian bishop who had studied in Edessa and the promoter of a revision of the Peshitta that was the basis for the Harklean Syriac version of the NT and was completed by his chorepiscopus Polycarp in 508, seems to have supported apokatastasis. Moreover, he spoke of the culture, fame, and intelligence of Bardaisan, a supporter of that doctrine.<sup>86</sup> Commenting on Matt 3:1–16,<sup>87</sup> he interpreted Jesus's baptism as a prefiguration of the apokatastasis of all to God, after the resurrection, when all will be submitted to the Son, and the Son to the Father, and God will be "all in all." 1 Cor 15:28 was Origen's and Nyssen's favourite Scriptural support for apokatastasis. As Philoxenus thought, all evil will disappear then, and God will animate all, as a soul animates the body.

Philoxenus, in his *Letter to Abraham and Orestes*,<sup>88</sup> reports Stephen Bar Sudhaili's eschatological thought in a way that reminds one of Isaac of

<sup>83</sup> See my "La coerenza."

<sup>84</sup> See Gasparro, *Origene e la tradizione*, 97–106.

<sup>85</sup> On the latter see the *Chapitres des disciples d'Évagre*, par P. Géhin, SC 514 (Paris, 2007). According to A. Muravjev, "Macarian or Evagrian," in *Origeniana VIII*, 1185–1191, esp. 1186, Evagrian Origenism reached Syriac monasticism first through collections of sentences, and later by means of the whole works by Evagrius.

<sup>86</sup> See my *Bardaisan of Edessa. A Reassessment of the Evidence and a New Interpretation, also in the Light of Origen and the Original Fragments from De India* (Piscataway, 2009), 287–288.

<sup>87</sup> See A. De Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog* (Louvain, 1963), 394.

<sup>88</sup> Vat. Syr. 107; Syriac and English in A.L. Frothingham, *Stephen Bar Sudhaili. The Syrian Mystic and the Book of Hierotheos* (Leiden, 1886), 28–48; T. Jansma, "Philoxenus' Letter to Abraham and Orestes Concerning Stephen bar Sudhaili," *Le Muséon* 87 (1984) 79–86.

Nineveh, *First Part* 28,202–205 (and Maximus the Confessor<sup>89</sup>): after the six days of the present world, the seventh will be of rest, and the eight/first is the resurrection and restoration, when God will be “all in all.” This restoration, in the *Book of the Holy Hierotheus* (the name of the teacher of Ps. Dionysius<sup>90</sup>), which is ascribed to Stephen by some Syriac authors of the eighth and ninth centuries,<sup>91</sup> is conceived as a radical deification: all creatures will become one with God, and the Trinity itself will even become one hypostasis: the Spirit, the Son, and all creatures will be absorbed into the Father.<sup>92</sup> Stephen’s Origenism was an extreme Evagrianism, which culminated in a kind of monarchianism/pantheism.<sup>93</sup> He radicalised the notion, already found in Origen, of apokatastasis as θέωσις and metaphysical movement of return to unity.

From the very beginning of the *Book*, the recommendation not to divulge it among uninitiated people characterises this work as esoteric. The author claims that he experienced the mystical union with the supreme Good

<sup>89</sup> On both Isaac and Maximus see below. But a similar scheme, although apparently not involving restoration, is already found in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (second century): the six days or ages are those of history; with the end of the world there will come the seventh day of rest, after the second coming of Christ and the Judgment; a new world will begin on the eighth day.

<sup>90</sup> See below in this same chapter.

<sup>91</sup> It is a treatise in five *memre*, in Syriac (ms. British Museum, Add. 7189), entitled *Book of the Holy Hierotheus on the Hidden Mysteries of the House of God*. Its preface speaks of a supposed translation from Greek into Syriac, which should probably be seen as part of the literary fiction. That Sudhaili was the author of this book was already known to Cyriacus of Antioch (eighth century, quoted by Barhebraeus, *Nomoc.* 7,9), John of Dara (eighth century) in *On the Resurrection of Human Bodies*, 4,21, and Barhebraeus himself in his *Mnarat Qudshe* and *Ecclesiastical History* (222 Abbeloos-Lamy), who also attests that many thought that the book was written by “the holy Hierotheus, the master of the holy Dionysius.” *The Book of the Holy Hierotheus Ascribed to Stephen Bar-Sudhaile* (c. 500 A.D.), ed. F.S. Marsh (London, 1927; Amsterdam, 1979 repr.); A. Vööbus, “Discovery of New Manuscript Sources for the Book of Hierotheos,” *Rivista di Studi Orientali* 49 (1975) 185–189; D. Bundy, “The Book of the Holy Hierotheos and Manichaeism,” *Augustinianum* 26 (1986) 273–279.

<sup>92</sup> See my “Hierotheus,” in *New Patristic Dictionary*, ed. A. Di Berardino (English edition forthcoming in Chicago from InterVarsity); “Deification—Theosis,” in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (Berlin, 2009–).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Guillaumont, *Les Kephalaia Gnostica d’Évagre*, 330–332. On Sudhaili, see Frothingham, *Stephen*; Daley, *Hope*, 183–184; K. Piggéra, *All-Erlösung und all-Einheit. Studien zum Buch des Heiligen Hierotheos und seine Rezeption in der syrisch-orthodoxen Theologie* (Wiesbaden, 2002); Idem, “Die Bildwelt im Buch des heiligen Hierotheos—ein philosophischer Mythos?,” in *Mystik—Metapher—Bild*, Hrsg. M. Tamcke (Göttingen, 2008), 29–42; *Rethinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, ed. S. Coakley—Ch.M. Stang (Malden, MA, 2009), with my review in *Review of Biblical Literature* 2010, esp. I. Perczel, “The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius,” in *Rethinking*, 27–42. Only Piggéra’s works on “the holy Hierotheus” have been composed after the rediscovery of Evagrius’s importance.



more than once. Sudhaili explains the nature of the Good and the ascent of the mind toward it, stating that “All rational essences glorify and love the Essence from which they were separated.” For it is from the primordial Essence that the spiritual and material universe proceeded. Sudhaili embraces the idea of the eventual end of punishments in the next word, whose function is thought to be purifying rather than retributive. In line with Nyssen’s view, the final restoration will include even demons and the devil, whose redemption is minutely described in the *Book*, in a chapter entitled *On the Repentance of Those Below*. It is an Origenism like his, an exasperation and systematisation of Evagrianism, with the idea that all creatures will share God’s very substance in the end, that seems to have been condemned at Constantinople (553), as I shall show. Indeed, Sudhaili depicted the spiritual resurrection, the mind’s victory over the powers of evil (described as “not-being,” as in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Evagrius), and its union with Christ-Logos, also depicted as the “Great Intellect” (ܥܠܡܐ ܥܝܝܢܐ), and then—once Christ has handed the Kingdom to the Father, according to 1 Cor 15:24–28—with the Spirit and the Father. At this point, all distinct existence will pass away, and only the absolute Good will remain, from which the universal Essence (ܥܠܡܐ ܥܝܝܢܐ = οὐσία) and all individual existences had proceeded, by which all is sustained, and to which all beings tend. “No being will perish or be destroyed, but all will return and be sanctified and united” to the supreme Good. Even beyond ܐܬܝܢܐ or “unity” (which was the culmination of Origen’s escalation of image → likeness → unity), the *Book* posits “mingling” (ܥܬܝܠܥܝܬܐ), where any duality between lover and beloved, glorifier and glorified will vanish. Thus God “will be all in all,” in a substantial way.

Philoxenus was also concerned that Sudhaili’s doctrine might render Christ’s suffering and death superfluous—note that apokatastasis in Origen is far from making them superfluous, but is rather *based* on them, as I have argued—, and thought that his conception of the final consubstantiality of all with God was impious, also because it even entailed the eventual re-absorption of the three Persons of the Trinity in one and the same Essence, from which the first divine emanation proceeded at the beginning. This evidently destroyed the Cappadocian—but already Origenian, as I have demonstrated<sup>94</sup>—formulation of the Trinity as one essence (οὐσία) in three individual substances (ὑποστάσεις).

<sup>94</sup> In “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism” and “Origen ... and the Birth of the Trinitarian meaning of Hypostasis.”

For his ideas, Sudhaili had to leave Edessa and flee to Palestine, near or in Jerusalem, where the monastic environment was more favourable to Origenism. It is uncertain whether he returned to Edessa later, where Barhebraeus locates his *floruit* around 542 CE in his ecclesiastical history (215 Abbeloos-Lamy). On the same account, Sudhaili was also attacked by Jacob of Sarug, who wrote a letter to him insisting on the eternity of punishment and on the parallel between “life everlasting” and “hell/fire everlasting.” This argument is not supported by Scriptural terminology,<sup>95</sup> but it is present in a passage ascribed to Basil (and possibly spurious) I have already discussed, in Augustine, as I have shown, and then in Justinian, as I shall point out.<sup>96</sup> Jacob’s argument was that God judges one’s intention; even if one’s sins have been limited in time, because one died, one would have gone on sinning forever if he had lived forever; therefore eternal punishment is right. This argument would have sounded aberrant to Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and others who laid such emphasis on human free will and the possibility of conversion and redemption at any stage, even for demons, thanks to the healing and enlightening work of Christ-Logos. Jacob’s argument patently contradicts that of Methodius and Gregory of Nyssa that God decreed physical death providentially, so to cut short each one’s sins and thus spare to all “an eternity of condemnation.”

While Frothingham directly identified Hierotheus with Sudhaili, and regarded the latter as the teacher of Ps. Dionysius, the author of the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, Louth thinks that Sudhaili’s *Book* is later than the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, which Sudhaili knew and by which he was inspired (also in the choice of names from the apostolic era for pseudonymity).<sup>97</sup> Perczel has suggested that Stephen Bar Sudhaili is the “brother Mor Stephen” who is mentioned in Sergius of Reshaina’s introduction to his Syriac translation

<sup>95</sup> In the Bible, the adjective is αἰώνιος, which does not mean “eternal, everlasting”; this is the meaning of αἰδιος, and only life is called αἰδιος in the Bible and many Greek Fathers, never death or punishment. See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new ed.

<sup>96</sup> See above, Ch. 3, section on Basil; above in this same Ch. 4, section on Augustine; below in this same chapter, section on Justinian. On Jacob’s eschatology see at least Th. Kolapampil, *Jacob of Sarug’s Homilies on the Resurrection* (Piscataway, 2008).

<sup>97</sup> A. Louth, “The Reception of Dionysius up to Maximus the Confessor,” in *Rethinking*, 43–54. A confession of faith ascribed to Hierotheus and contained in an Arabic manuscript (Arab. Vat. 409f. 397) also reveals elements of pantheism and mysticism that are found in Sudhaili’s *Book*. A detailed commentary of the *Book*, which is extant, was authored by Theodosius of Antioch (ninth century), and Barhebraeus wrote an abridgement of it, to which he attached a commentary mainly derived from that of Theodosius. He joined the sections of the *Book* that deal with the beginning and the end; protology and eschatology were closely related in the Origenian tradition.

of the *Corpus Dionysianum*, in which Sergius reads the Corpus in the light of the Evagrian doctrine and to which I shall return;<sup>98</sup> Sergius wishes him to enjoy the eventual apokatastasis.<sup>99</sup> Should this identification be correct, Stephen would have helped Sergius in his translation; this would also explain the shared vocabulary between this translation and the *Book of Hierotheus*. The radical Origenism of the *Book of Hierotheus* and of the introduction and translation of the *Corpus Dionysianum* by Sergius makes it more likely that Ps. Dionysius himself belonged to an Origenian milieu.

In Syriac culture, after Sudhaili, a reaction seems to have taken place, animated by those who wanted to purify Evagrius's thought from Stephen's interpretation and radicalisation. In the sixth century, Hnana of Adiabene, too, a prolific exegete and the head of the illustrious School of Nisibis, was accused of "Origenism" by the *katholikos* Isho'yav.<sup>100</sup> There seems to be no way, however, to determine whether he supported the doctrine of apokatastasis.

### *The Mystery of Ps. Dionysius, His Teacher, and His Lost Writings*

Hierotheus, whose name appears in the title of Bar Sudhaili's Origenistic and pantheistic *Book of the Holy Hierotheus*—provided that Sudhaili is really its author, as it seems—is presented by Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite as his own teacher.<sup>101</sup> In *DN* 3,2 Hierotheus is praised as superior to all other Christian sages after the apostles—a description that immediately reminds

<sup>98</sup> See below in this same chapter, section on Ps. Dionysius.

<sup>99</sup> I. Perczel, "The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius," in *Rethinking*, 27–42.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. A.H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom. The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia, 2006), 169–203 (my review in *Hugoye* 10,2 [2007] §§1–18). The decline of the School of Nisibis at the beginning of the VII cent. might be connected with the controversy surrounding Hnana of Adiabene, who led the school in those days: the Barhadbshabba who wrote the so-called *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools*, which displays high praises of Hnana, may be the same as the one who signed the condemnation of Hnana and left the School of Nisibis: in this case, one ought to suppose a change in his attitude toward Hnana. This is entirely possible, since the *Cause* was probably written before the outbreak of the controversy, which is, at any rate, difficult to reconstruct: he too was charged with "Origenism," but this had meantime become so multivalent and vague an accusation that it is unclear what the point of the controversy was.

<sup>101</sup> A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London, 2001<sup>2</sup>), 28–29; Hierotheus's significance to Ps. Dionysius is to be seen in relation to liturgy; 102–103; Hierotheus is important for his mystical experience. On the author of the Corpus, who is enjoying a revival of interest in scholarship, I limit myself to referring to selected works in addition to Louth's: Coakley–Stang, *Rethinking*; A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys* (Oxford, 2006<sup>2</sup>), K. Ruh, *Die mystische Gotteslehre des Dionysius Areopagita* (München, 1987); B.R. Suchla, *Verteidigung eines platonischen Denkmodells einer christlichen Welt* (Göttingen, 1995); Y. de

me of Didymus's and Jerome's description of Origen, when Jerome was still an admirer of Origen; might this mean that Hierotheus for Ps. Dionysius and Sudhaili was a counterpart of Origen?—, and is depicted as a contemporary of the apostles (like Dionysius himself) who attended the blessed Virgin's funeral.<sup>102</sup> In *DN* 2,9–10 and 4,15–17 Dionysius allegedly quotes two excerpts from works by Hierotheus. In the first, the reference he gives is to Hierotheus's *Elements of Theology* (Θεολογικαὶ στοιχειώσεις), a *pendant* to the allegedly lost *Outlines of Theology* (Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις) by Ps. Dionysius himself, to which I shall return in a moment. In the second quotation, the reference is to Hierotheus's *Hymns on Love* (Ἐρωτικοὶ ὕμνοι). It has been suggested that these are in fact works stemming from the school of Edessa, or in any case from a Syriac milieu, toward the end of the fifth century. It is also possible that these works of Hierotheus did not have an autonomous existence, but are due to Ps. Dionysius himself, or even that they were never

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Andia (ed.), *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité* (Paris, 1997); *Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter*, eds. T. Boiadjev–G. Kapriev–A. Speer (Turnhout, 2000); S. Lilla, *Dionigi Areopagita e il platonismo cristiano* (Brescia, 2005); Chr. Schäfer, *The Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Leiden, 2006), especially on *De divinis nominibus*; E. Perl, *Theophany* (Albany, NY, 2007), on Ps. Dionysius' Neoplatonism, independently of Christian aspects, *praes.* Ch. 1 on God's transcendence and apophaticism and 3 on the ontological non-subistence of evil (on which see also C. Scouteris, "Malum privatio est," in *Studia Patristica* 18,3 [1989] 539–550); B.R. Suchla, *Dionysius Areopagita: Leben–Werk–Wirkung* (Freiburg, 2008); T. Alexopoulos, "Inwieweit ist die Synthese zwischen Neuplatonismus und Christentum in der philosophisch-theologischen Position des Dionysius Areopagita gelungen?" *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* 8 (2009) 119–138. R.A. Arthur, "The Dating of the Dionysian Corpus," in *Studia Patristica* 44 (2010) 171–177; F. Ivanovic (ed.), *Dionysius the Areopagite between Orthodoxy and Heresy* (Newcastle, 2011), *praes.* G. Kocijancic, "The Identity of Dionysius the Areopagite," Ch. 2. Louth, "The Reception," 43, observes that the Neoplatonism of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* has been "invoked to demonstrate" that its author "was not really a Christian at all, but a pagan Neoplatonist who sought to preserve in the harshly Christian empire of Justinian the Neoplatonic tradition." He cites Vanneste, Hathaway, and Brons as examples among many. I could add C.M. Mazzucchi, "Damascio autore del *Corpus Dionysiacum* e il dialogo *Peri politikês epistêmês*," *Aevum* 80 (2006) 299–334, who proposes an identification with Damascius, already defended by Ronald Hathaway (reactions, e.g., in V. Napoli, *Ἐπέχεινα τοῦ ἐνός* [Catania–Palermo, 2008], 217; E. Fiori, *Adamantius* 14 [2008] 670–672). Like Perczel, Paul Rorem, Ysabel de Andia, Alexander Golitzin, and others, among whom recently P. Gavrielyuk, "Did Ps.-Dionysius Live in Constantinople?" *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008) 505–514, and R. Arthur, *Pseudo-Dionysius as Polemicist* (London, 2008), who proposes Sergius of Reshaina as the author of the *Corpus* (ch. 4), Louth sees in Ps. Dionysius a Christian, a hypothesis already envisaged by Hausherr and Balthasar, and sees the *Caelestis Hierarchia* as a response to the *Book of Hierotheus*.

<sup>102</sup> The reference to the Virgin is almost universally received by scholars, but Perczel, "The Reception," adduces this as an interesting example of how alternatives can be found to John of Scythopolis' interpretations. The reference to the Dormition is John's interpretation of Ps. Dionysius's words, which might also refer to a council he attended together with other colleagues (bishops), possibly Chalcedon.

written by anyone, but their purported quotations were composed by Ps. Dionysius. Or else, as I would suggest as a possible alternative, these might be allusions to Origen's works: the Ἑρωτικοὶ ὕμνοι might conceal a reference to Origen's Commentary on the Song of Songs—which, as I shall show, Ps. Dionysius knew very well—and the Θεολογικαὶ στοιχειώσεις might refer to Origen's Περὶ Ἀρχῶν, or to the whole of Origen's work.

The portrait of Hierotheus that emerges from Ps. Dionysius is that of a sublime theologian and mystic, παθὼν τὰ θεῖα, whose writings are δευτέρα λόγια, like a “second Scripture” (this, again, would fit well with Origen's inspired exegesis; it might even hint at what Origen called δευτερώσεις, which included, again, the Song of Songs).<sup>103</sup> Ps. Dionysius's claim that he was taught by Hierotheus, “holy God,” might even mean that Ps. Dionysius intended to suggest that his own writings were divinely inspired, or that they were inspired by Origen. The first of the two above-cited excerpts treats Christ-Logos, who maintains the harmony of the parts and the whole, being above both the parts and the whole, in terms that strongly resemble Clement's and Origen's theology.<sup>104</sup> The second expounds the gradation of love, whose different forms and powers are reduced to unity: the Neoplatonic motif culminates in the Christian principle of God—ἀγάπη. Love is a unifying force that moves all, from the Good to the last of beings and from the last of beings to the Good. This would be perfectly attuned indeed with a reference to Origen's Commentary on the Song of Songs.

In a catalogue of Constantinople manuscripts<sup>105</sup> there even appears a confusion between Hierotheus and Dionysius the Areopagite. Indeed, Ps. Dionysius affirms (DN 3,2–3) that his works are but explications of Hierotheus's “synoptic” teaching, directed to initiated. Interestingly, being a pseudonym, Hierotheus is not included in the list of objections to the identi-

<sup>103</sup> In the prologue to his Commentary on the Song of Songs Origen ascribes a peculiar status to the first chapters of Genesis, those including the creation account. He declares that these chapters must be studied only at the end of one's *cursus studiorum*, after the rest of the Bible, just like the Song of Songs (these Biblical books constitute what he calls the δευτερώσεις, since they must come *after* all the rest in one's study plan). The reason is easy to see: the Genesis account of creation, just as the Song of Songs (and we could add Revelation), ought to be entirely allegorized and cannot absolutely be taken literally. Therefore, they require a mature student. See my “The Philosophical Stance of Allegory” and further details in “Plato in Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's Conception of the *Arkhe* and the *Telos*,” in *Plato in the Third Sophistic*, ed. R. Fowler (Berlin, 2013).

<sup>104</sup> See my “Clement's Notion of the Logos ‘All Things as One.’ Its Alexandrian Background in Philo and Developments in Origen and Nyssen,” in *Alexandrian Personae: Scholarly Culture and Religious Traditions in Ancient Alexandria*, ed. Z. Pleše (Tübingen, 2013).

<sup>105</sup> A. Possevin, *Apparatus Sacer* (Coloniae Agrippinae, 1608), II, 46.

fication of the author of the *Corpus Dionysianum* with the Dionysius converted by Paul in sixth-century presbyter Theodore's *The Book of St. Dionysius Is Authentic* (ap. Phot. Bibl. Cod. 1, 1a–2a Bekker).<sup>106</sup> Ps. Dionysius's reference to Hierotheus as a contemporary of the apostles fits well within his pseudonymity strategy, of which the choice of a name that refers to the Athenian philosopher converted by Paul after his Areopagus speech (Acts 17) is part and parcel. After Louth's insight,<sup>107</sup> Stang suggests that, just as Paul used the Greek philosophical thought on the divine as a basis for his own discourse about Christian theology,<sup>108</sup> so did the author of the *Corpus*;<sup>109</sup> only, in the sixth century the philosophers at stake were no longer Stoics and Epicureans, but late Neoplatonists. Indeed, Paul's Athenian speech is the point of departure of Patristic philosophy, beginning with Justin, the first Christian Platonist, who seems to me to have programmatically alluded to it.<sup>110</sup> His second Apology refers to Paul's Athenian speech when in 10,6 it observes that Socrates criticised pagan polytheism and exhorted people "to the knowledge of the unknown God [θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγνώστου] through rational investigation," which clearly alludes to Acts 17:23. Ps. Dionysius, like Paul and Origen, his inspirers, wanted to make the riches of Greek metaphysics and theology fruitful for the Christian theologico-philosophical discourse. He agrees with Paul (Rom 1:20–25) that the Greeks received from God the true philosophy that leads to the knowledge of God. The Greeks lost it in pagan polytheism, but precisely philosophers could recover it, thanks to henotheism<sup>111</sup> and a

<sup>106</sup> This lost work refuted four objections to the authenticity: both Eusebius and other Fathers never cite the *Corpus*; the *Corpus* expounds traditions that have developed progressively inside the Church; the author cites Ignatius who lived after Dionysius.

<sup>107</sup> Louth, *Denys*, 10–11, observes that to Dionysius Athens meant philosophy, specifically Plato; therefore, by choosing the *persona* of Dionysius, the author of the *Corpus* intended to convey the message that "the truths that Plato grasped belong to Christ."

<sup>108</sup> See my "Philosophen und Prediger: Dion und Paulus—pagane und christliche weise Männer," in *Dion von Prusa. Der Philosoph und sein Bild*, eingeleitet, übersetzt, und mit interpretierenden Essays versehen von H.-G. Nesselrath et al. (Tübingen, 2009), 183–210.

<sup>109</sup> Ch. Stang, "Dionysius, Paul, and the Significance of the Pseudonym," in *Rethinking*, 11–25.

<sup>110</sup> See my "Alle radici della filosofia patristica: Paolo all'Areopago e l'eredità del pensiero greco," *Invigilata Lucernis* 30 (2008) 149–176; "Dieu et la philosophie: le discours de Paul à Athènes dans trois 'actes apocryphes' et la philosophie patristique," *Gregorianum* 93 (2012) 75–91.

<sup>111</sup> I prefer to speak of henotheism within "paganism" rather than monotheism. On this question see M. Frede, "Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Late Antiquity," in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, eds. Id.–P. Athanassiadi (Oxford, 1999), 41–68, and the whole book, with the reviews of M.J. Edwards, *Journal of Theological Studies* 51 (2000), 339–342, and T.D. Barnes, "Monotheists All?," *Phoenix* 55 (2001) 142–162; H.J. Klauck, "Pantheisten,

more dignified notion of the divinity, gained through the seeds of the Logos that God's Logos itself, Christ, sowed in them. This reflects the conception of Justin and Clement, assimilated by Origen and subsequent Patristic philosophers, among whom Ps. Dionysius.

These, from Justin to Ps. Dionysius (and later on Maximus and Eriugena), were Christian Platonists, influenced by Stoicism as well. The author of Acts, however, as Ps. Dionysius surely noticed, does not mention Platonists among those who were eager to learn more about Paul's theology in Athens, but only Stoics and Epicureans. Yet, the first century marked the revival of Platonism with Middle Platonism. Now, this odd absence can point to the historicity of the Athenian episode in Acts 17: Paul did not find Middle Platonists in Athens at the time of his Areopagus speech, toward the middle of the first century, because historically they were not yet there. Ammonius, Plutarch's teacher, arrived only later from Alexandria to set up a school in Athens. This is probably not quite the kind of reflection that might have occurred to Ps. Dionysius; he is more likely to have justified the absence of the Platonists, if he noticed it, by thinking that these were the closest of all philosophers to Paul's Christian message and did not need to argue with him.

Also, the author of the *Acts of Philip*<sup>112</sup> clearly echoes Paul's Areopagus episode, insisting on its philosophical context. Philip, not by accident one of the apostles who belonged to the group of the "Hellenists," is sent to preach, like Paul, to the Athenians. There he is mistaken for a philosopher because of his garb, and he speaks before philosophers, who, as in the case of Paul in Acts, are very interested in what he has to say. His is a religious discourse, but Christianity in the Philip episode is already characterised as a *philosophy*, as

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Polytheisten, Monotheisten," in *Religion und Gesellschaft im frühen Christentum* (Tübingen, 2003), 3–56; Id., *The Religious Context of Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, 2003), 331–428, on the relationship between philosophy and religion in the imperial age; M.J. Edwards, "Pagan and Christian Monotheism in the Age of Constantine," in *Approaching Late Antiquity. The Transformation from Early to Late Empire*, eds. Id.-Simon Swain (Oxford, 2004), 211–234, who argues that pagan monotheism never existed in the Roman Empire; *Religiöse Philosophie und philosophische Religion der frühen Kaiserzeit*, eds. R. Hirsch-Luipold–H. Görgemanns–M. von Albrecht (Tübingen, 2009) with my review in *Anzeiger für die Altertumswissenschaft* 64,3/4 (Juli/Oktober 2011) 168–171; I. Ramelli, "Monoteismo," in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiane*, ed. A. Di Berardino, II (Genoa, 2007), 3350–3358; *One God. Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, eds. S. Mitchell–P. van Nuffelen (Cambridge, 2010); *Monotheism between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity*, eds. Eid. (Leuven, 2010).

<sup>112</sup> Ed. F. Bovon–B. Bouvier–F. Amstler; *Corpus Christianorum Apocrypha* 11 (Turnhout, 1999). See my "Mansuetudine, grazia e salvezza negli *Acta Philippi*," *Invigilata Lucernis* 29 (2007) 215–228.

Justin defined it drawing inspiration from Paul's Areopagus speech. His line was followed by Clement, Origen, Nyssen, and Ps. Dionysius. It is meaningful that the accusation against Philip is no longer of introducing new *deities*, as that against Paul, but of introducing a new, strange *philosophy*. That this philosophy is characterised *theologically*—just as Justin's φιλοσοφία θεία and, later on, Ps. Dionysius's own philosophy—is evident from the decision of the Athenian philosophers to write, not to some philosophers, but to Ananias, the Hebrew high priest. He comes to Athens for a public discussion with Philip, again in front of the Athenian philosophers, as in Acts 17, and again on theological matters.<sup>113</sup>

Allegedly the disciple of Hierotheus in the apostolic age, and allegedly the Athenian convert of St. Paul, Ps. Dionysius, a Christian Neoplatonist stemming, as it seems, from a Syriac environment, is probably an *Origenian* Platonist. Gregory of Nyssa's influence was strong on him; from Origen's and Nyssen's apophaticism he derived his own negative theology.<sup>114</sup> There are even verbal borrowings from Gregory of Nyssa (such as the newly coined θεοπλαστία in *DN* 2,9, from Nyssen's θεόπλαστος, *In Eccl.* GNO V 336) and Origen (such as μονὰς καὶ ἑνὰς; see below), and precise, peculiar theological details that go back to them.<sup>115</sup> It seems significant to me that in a core passage concerning ecstasy, in *MT* 1,1, Ps. Dionysius inserted a quotation (πάντα ἀφελών) from Plotinus (ἄφελε πάντα, *Enn.* 5,3,17), who inspired Gregory Nyssen as well on this score.<sup>116</sup> Ps. Dionysius maintained that rational

<sup>113</sup> See my "Philosophen und Prediger," 183–210.

<sup>114</sup> See, e.g., É. Des Places, "Le Ps. Denys l'Aréopagite, ses précurseurs et sa postérité," *Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne* 7 (1981) 323–332; P. Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto, 1984); A. Ghisalberti, "Conoscere negando," in *La differenza e l'origine* (Milan, 1987), 20–40; D. Carabine, *The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena* (Louvain, 1995); D. Turner, *The Darkness of God. Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1995), 19–49; W. Beierwaltes, *Der verborgene Gott* (Trier, 1997); J.P. Williams, "The Apophatic Theology of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite," *Downside Review* 117 (1999), 157–172; 235–250; Ch.A. Terezis, "Aspects de la notion de 'mal' chez Proclus et chez Denys l'Aréopagite," *Byzantion* 70 (2000) 491–506; A. Meis Wörmer, "Die Verborgenheit Gottes im Höhlenliedkommentar Gregors von Nyssa und ihre Rezeption durch Pseudo-Dionysius," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 77 (2001) 73–107; J. Dietrich, "Negative Theologie bei Ps.Dionysios Areopagita und Mose ben Maimon," *Theologie und Philosophie* 76 (2001) 161–184. On evil in Proclus see now also R. Chlup, "Proclus' Theory of Evil: An Ethical Perspective," *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 3 (2009) 26–57.

<sup>115</sup> E.g. the notion that the Incarnation bears on "theology," and not simply on "economy." See A. Ojell, "The Most Evident Idea in Theology? Gregory of Nyssa and Ps. Dionysius on the Theological Significance of Incarnation," in *Studia Patristica* 46 (2010) 183–188.

<sup>116</sup> See my "Apofatismo cristiano e relativismo pagano: un confronto tra filosofi platonici," in *Verità e mistero nel pluralismo culturale della tarda antichità*, ed. A.M. Mazzanti (Bologna,



creatures will be united to God in the end,<sup>117</sup> and I shall point out elements that suggest that both in preserved and in lost works he supported the theory of apokatastasis. In this, he probably followed authors he knew, such as Clement, Origen, Gregory Nyssen, Evagrius, and Neoplatonism, from which he inherited the μονή-πρόδος-ἐπιστροφή scheme; he also shared with these thinkers the metaphysical tenet of the ontological non-subsistence of evil (see below). Apokatastasis for Ps. Dionysius—just as for Eriugena afterwards<sup>118</sup>—coincides with the culmination of ἐπιστροφή, the third movement, the return of all beings to their Cause:

The Cause of All is “all in all,” according to the Biblical saying [κατὰ τὸ λόγιον],<sup>119</sup> and certainly it must be praised in that it is the Giver of existence to all, the Originator of all beings, *who brings all to perfection* [τελειωτική], holding them together and protecting them; their seat, which *has them all return to itself* [πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἐπιστρεπτική], and this in a unified, *irresistible* and absolute [ἀσχέτως], and transcendent way. (DN 1,7,596c–597a)

Again, Ps. Dionysius insists that God is “the Cause of the *perfecting* [τελειώσις] of all beings [...] it has pre-taken in itself *all beings* with the perfect acts of goodness of its *providence*, which is the cause of all.” That all beings are brought to perfection by God, that they will all return to God, and that God’s goodness and providence are the cause of all, is surely coherent with an apokatastasis vision. In this connection Ps. Dionysius speaks of the eschatological παλιγγενεσία (EH 7,1,1.3; 7.3.1).

Moreover, Ps. Dionysius used the apokatastasis terminology itself. Like Evagrius, he may even have played on the astronomical meaning of the very term ἀποκατάστασις to allude, allegorically, to the eventual restoration. In DN p. 146,19 Suchla,<sup>120</sup> the return of heavenly bodies is decided by God, the

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2009), 101–169, and with further arguments “Silenzio apofatico in Gregorio di Nissa: un confronto con Plotino e un’indagine delle ascendenze origeniane,” in *Silenzio e Parola* (Rome, 2012).

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Daley, *Hope*, 183: “The goal of all created existence, in the Dionysian system, is to regain the lost unity of intelligent creatures with God in contemplative knowledge and love, a unity that forms in the creature the likeness of God”; Y. de Andia, “Philosophie et union mystique chez le Ps. Denys l’Aréopagite,” in *Sophies Maïeuses. Hommages à J. Pépin*, éd. M.-O. Goulet-Cazé–G. Madec–D. O’Brien (Paris, 1992), 511–531; Wadem, “Mystères, unification et divinisation de l’homme selon Denys l’Aréopagite,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 63 (1997) 273–332; P. Rorem, *Ps.-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence* (New York, 1993); J. Rico Pavés, *Semejanza a Dios y divinización en el Corpus Dionysiacum* (Toledo, 2001).

<sup>118</sup> See below in this same chapter, the last section.

<sup>119</sup> 1 Cor 15:28, Origen’s favourite passage in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis.

<sup>120</sup> Edition by B.R. Suchla, *Corpus Dionysiacum I (DN)* (Berlin, 1990).

Good, and the light of the sun is (with an obvious reminiscence of Plato) the symbol of the Good; thus, in the light of this symbolic interpretation of the heavenly bodies, the apokatastasis of the stars may well be the symbol of the general apokatastasis, this too provided by God.<sup>121</sup> Indeed, if the sun represents the Good/God, the heavenly bodies can well represent the rational creatures who participate in the Good. Even more interesting is *DN* p. 202,14, in which God's power is said to proceed down to all beings, to preserve them by leading them to their own good, to preserve angels uncontaminated, to order the apokatastasis of heavenly bodies, and even to offer deification as a gift, providing the relevant capacity to those who will be ἐκθεοούμενοι.<sup>122</sup> In this passage, again, astronomical apokatastasis can well be a symbol of the restoration of rational creatures, all the more in that it is mentioned between the idea of the angels, who are preserved uncontaminated, and that of the θέωσις of rational creatures.

The most significant point, however, is that at least two passages from the *Corpus Areopagiticum* prove that for Ps. Dionysius the third Neoplatonic metaphysical movement, that of ἐπιστροφή, after μονή and πρόοδος, indeed coincides with ἀποκατάστασις. In *EH* 82,17 and 83,7 the movement of the priest from the altar to the extremities of the church and then back to the altar is assimilated to the divine movements of πρόοδος and ἐπιστροφή, and it is remarkable that for this movement of return the terminology of apokatastasis is used: πάλιν ἐπ' αὐτῷ τελειωτικῶς ἀποκαθιστάμενον, in reference to the priest's return to the altar (82,17), and εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρχὴν ἀμειώτως ἀποκαθίσταται, in reference to the spiritual interpretation of this return (83,7). Apokatastasis is the return to the Monad and unification (εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν μονάδα συνάγεται καὶ ἐνοποιεῖ τοὺς ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἱερῶς ἀναγομένους, where, moreover, the application of the terminology of *oikeiōsis* to the notion of

<sup>121</sup> Τῶν οὐρανίων ἀρχῶν καὶ ἀποπερατώσεων αἰτία τὰγαθόν [...] τῆς παμμεγέθους οὐρανοπορίας κινήσεων καὶ τῶν ἀστρώων τάξεων [...] καὶ τῆς τῶν δύο φωστήρων, οὓς τὰ λόγια καλεῖ μεγάλους, ἀπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν εἰς τὰ αὐτὰ περιοδικῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως [...] Τί ἂν τις φαίη περὶ αὐτῆς καθ' αὐτὴν τῆς ἡλιακῆς ἀκτίνος; Ἐκ τὰγαθοῦ γὰρ τὸ φῶς καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος.

<sup>122</sup> Πρὸεισι δὲ τὰ τῆς ἀνεκλείπτου δυνάμεως καὶ εἰς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ζῶα καὶ φυτὰ καὶ τὴν ὅλην τοῦ παντὸς φύσιν [...] καὶ τὰς τοῦ παντὸς τάξεις καὶ εὐθημοσύνας εἰς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἀγαθὸν διασώζει καὶ τὰς ἀθανάτους τῶν ἀγγελικῶν ἐνάδων ζωὰς ἀλωβήτους διαφυλάττει καὶ τὰς οὐρανίας καὶ φωστηρικὰς καὶ ἀστρώους οὐσίας καὶ τάξεις ἀναλλοιώτους καὶ τὸν αἰῶνα δύνασθαι εἶναι ποιεῖ καὶ τὰς τοῦ χρόνου περιελίξεις διακρίνει μὲν ταῖς προόδοις, συνάγει δὲ ταῖς ἀποκαταστάσεσι [...] καὶ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς ἀδιάλυτον μονὴν ἀσφαλίζεται καὶ τὴν θέωσιν αὐτὴν δωρεῖται δύναμιν εἰς τοῦτο τοῖς ἐκθεοουμένοις παρέχουσα. On deification in Ps. Dionysius see at least Y. de Andia, *L'union à Dieu chez Denys l'Aréopagite* (Leiden, 1996), and now V. Kharlamov, *The Beauty of the Unity and the Harmony of the Whole: The Concept of Theosis in the Theology of Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite* (Eugene, OR, 2009).

apokatastasis is inherited from Origen and Gregory of Nyssa). This is the full passage, which requires to be read entirely and in Greek:

Τὸν ἱεράρχην ἐνθέως ἰδεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ θυσιαστηρίου μέχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων τοῦ ἱεροῦ μετ' εὐοσμίας ἰόντα καὶ πάλιν ἐπ' αὐτῷ τελειωτικῶς ἀποκαθιστάμενον. Ἡ τε γὰρ ὑπὲρ πάντα θεαρχικὴ μακαριότης, εἰ καὶ ἀγαθότητι θείᾳ πρόεισιν εἰς τὴν τῶν μετεχόντων αὐτῆς ἱερῶν κοινωνίαν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔξω τῆς κατ' οὐσίαν ἀκινήτου στάσεως καὶ ἰδρύσεως γίνεται, πᾶσι δὲ τοῖς θεοειδέσιν ἀναλόγως ἐλλάμπει περὶ ἑαυτὴν ὄντως οὖσα καὶ τῆς οἰκειᾶς ὅλως οὐ παρακινουμένη ταυτότητος. Ὡσαύτως ἡ θεία τῆς συνάξεως τελετή, καὶ ἐνιαίαν καὶ ἀπλήν ἔχουσα καὶ συνεπτυγμένην ἀρχὴν εἰς τὴν ἱεράν ποικιλίαν τῶν συμβόλων φιλανθρώπως πληθύνηται καὶ μέχρι πάσης χωρῆς τῆς ἱεραρχικῆς εἰκονογραφίας, ἀλλ' ἐνοειδῶς ἐκ τούτων αὐθις εἰς τὴν οἰκειάν μονάδα συνάγεται καὶ ἐνοποιεῖ τοὺς ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἱερῶς ἀναγομένους.

Κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν δὴ θεοειδῆ τρόπον ὁ θεῖος ἱεράρχης, εἰ καὶ τὴν ἐνιαίαν αὐτοῦ τῆς ἱεραρχίας ἐπιστήμην ἀγαθοειδῶς εἰς τοὺς ὑποβεβηκότας κατὰγει τοῖς τῶν ἱερῶν αἰνιγμάτων πλήθει χρώμενος, ἀλλ' αὐθις ὡς ἀπόλυτος καὶ τοῖς ἥτιοσιν ἀκατάσχετος εἰς τὴν οἰκειάν ἀρχὴν ἀμειώτως ἀποκαθίσταται καὶ τὴν εἰς τὸ ἐν ἑαυτοῦ νοεράν ποιησάμενος εἴσοδον ὁρᾷ καθαρώς τοὺς τῶν τελουμένων ἐνοειδεῖς λόγους τῆς ἐπὶ τὰ δευτέρα φιλανθρώπου προόδου τὸ πέρας τὴν εἰς τὰ πρῶτα θειοτέραν ἐπιστροφὴν ποιούμενος.

In an inspired way it is possible to see the priest, who holds the holy power, go from the divine altar to the most extreme parts of the temple with the perfume (of incense), and then *return back* [lit. *be restored*] *to the same altar, having fulfilled all to perfection*. Indeed, also God's sovereign beatitude, which transcends all, even if, out of its divine goodness, it makes itself available to the communion of those holy creatures who participate in it, nevertheless does not exit the immobile rest and stability that characterise its own nature, and yet it shines forth in the very same way to all those who are in the image of God, while remaining in itself from the ontological point of view, absolutely without moving from its identity.

In the same way, the divine mystery of the office, although it has a single, simple, and unified principle, multiplies itself into a sacred variety of symbols out of love for the human beings, and extends down to all the holy iconography, but from all this in turn *it gathers itself back into its own monad* in a unified way, and *unifies those who are led back up to itself* in a holy manner.

Exactly in the same godlike way, thus, the divine priest brings down to his inferiors his unitary science of the hierarchy by imitation of the divine goodness, using the multiplicity of the holy enigmas, but in turn he is restored to his original principle without suffering any diminution, qua free and independent of his inferiors. And, having made his intellectual entrance into the One, he sees in a pure way the unitary *logoi* of the ceremonies celebrated, making *the goal and perfecting of the procession* toward the second realities, dictated by love for human beings, *the divine return to the first realities*.

My contention is further confirmed by DN 4,14 (p. 160,15), in which the meta-physical movement of ἐπιστροφή or return (εἰς τὰγαθὸν ἐπιστρεφόμενην),

which comes after that of *πρόδος* or procession (*ἀγαθὴν πρόδον*), is identified with *ἀποκατάστασις* outright. Indeed, the terminology of *apokatastasis* is directly employed for the *ἐπιστροφή*: God's love forms a circle that proceeds from the Good—for God is “Beauty and Good itself”—and returns to the Good; it “always proceeds, remains, and returns to the same” Good (*κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ προϊὼν αἰεὶ καὶ μένων καὶ ἀποκαθιστάμενος*). All this is a doctrine that Ps. Dionysius ascribes to his teacher Hierotheus, who developed it in his *Hymns on Love*:

Τὸ μόνον αὐτὸ δι' ἑαυτὸ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ὡς περ ἔκφανσιν ὄντα ἑαυτοῦ δι' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἐξηρημένης ἐνώσεως ἀγαθὴν πρόδον καὶ ἐρωτικὴν κίνησιν ἀπλὴν, αὐτοκίνητον, αὐτενέργητον, προσῶσαν ἐν τάγαθῷ καὶ ἐκ τάγαθοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐκβλυζομένην καὶ αὖθις εἰς τάγαθόν ἐπιστρεφομένην. Ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὸ ἀτελεύτητον ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἀναρχον ὁ θεὸς ἔρως ἐνδείκνυται διαφερόντως ὡς περ τις ἀίδιος κύκλος διὰ τάγαθόν, ἐκ τάγαθοῦ καὶ ἐν τάγαθῷ καὶ εἰς τάγαθόν ἐν ἀπλανεῖ συνελίξει περιπορευόμενος καὶ ἐν ταύτῳ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ προϊὼν αἰεὶ καὶ μένων καὶ ἀποκαθιστάμενος.

Ταῦτα καὶ ὁ κλεινὸς ἡμῶν ἱεροτελεστής ἐνθέως ὑφηγήσατο κατὰ τοὺς ἐρωτικούς ὕμνους, ὧν οὐκ ἄτοπον ἐπιμνησθῆναι καὶ οἶον ἱεράν τινα κεφαλὴν ἐπιθεῖναι τῷ περὶ ἔρωτος ἡμῶν λόγῳ. Τὸν ἔρωτα, εἴτε θεῖον εἴτε ἀγγελικόν εἴτε νοερὸν εἴτε ψυχικόν εἴτε φυσικὸν εἴποιμεν, ἐνωτικὴν τινα καὶ συγκρατικὴν ἐννοήσωμεν δύναμιν ...

The only one who is *Beauty and Good per se* is the manifestation, so to say, of itself through itself, the good *procession* of the transcendent unity, and simple movement of love, self-moving, self-operating, proceeding in the Good and gushing out from the Good to the beings and *returning again to the Good*. In this the divine love exceptionally clearly shows its own lack of an end and a beginning, like a kind of *infinite and absolutely eternal circle through the Good, from the Good, in the Good, and toward the Good*, proceeding around in an introversive non-wandering spiral, always proceeding, remaining, and *returning* [lit. *being restored*] in the same movement and the same way.

These truths were also explained, in his *divinely inspired exegesis*, by my illustrious and holy initiator in his *Hymns on Love*. It will be particularly appropriate to quote from these Hymns and thus provide my own discourse on love with a sacred introduction, as it were: “Love, be it divine or angelic or intellectual or psychic/animal or physical, should be understood as a unitive force that gathers together ...”

This inspired exegete is probably Origen in his commentary on the Song of Songs. Ps. Dionysius is indeed paraphrasing the initial sections of this commentary. This is why I wonder again whether there may be a relationship between these ἐρωτικοὶ ὕμνοι and Origen's commentary on the Song of Songs, all the more in that Origen notably used ἔρως—reworking and changing its Platonic meaning—besides ἀγάπη to refer to God's love, and did conceive

it as a unifying force, exactly as Hierotheus did according to Ps. Dionysius.<sup>123</sup> Thus, for instance, in *Comm. in Cant.* prol. 2,16 he insisted that besides *carnalis amor* or *Cupido* one should also admit of *quidam spiritualis amor* (ἔρως) relevant to the *interior homo*. It is Origen that Ps. Dionysius had likely in mind when in *DN* 4,12 he remarks that “the theologians” treated ἀγάπη and ἔρως as synonyms; this is also why he ascribes ἔρως to the Divinity in *DN* 4,10. A further clue is that when Ps. Dionysius cites Ignatius to justify his bold application of the ἔρως terminology to divine love in *DN* 4,12, he is obviously repeating Origen’s move in his commentary on the Song of Songs: *Non ergo interest utrum amari [ἐρᾶσθαι] dicatur Deus aut diligī [ἀγαπᾶσθαι], nec puto quod culpari possit si quis Deum, sicut Iohannes caritatem [ἀγάπη], ita ipse amorem [ἔρως] nominet. Denique meminī aliquem sanctorum dixisse, Ignatium nomine, de Christo: Meus autem amor [ἔρως] crucifixus est* (prol. 2,36). In general, not only the application of ἔρως to God, but also the doctrine of apokatastasis would be very opportunely ascribed to Origen (under the name of Hierotheus, in case this were a counterpart of Origen).

In *TM* 7,9 p. 130 H.-R. Ps. Dionysius develops the concept, dear to Origen and Nyssen, of *anastasis* as apokatastasis, that is, of the resurrection as a restoration of the whole of humanity, not only in the body, but also in the soul, which means the sanctification and salvation of humanity; in this sense, the resurrection will be “most complete, most perfect”: τὸν ὅλον ἄνθρωπον ἀγιάζουσα καὶ τὴν ὀλικὴν αὐτοῦ σωτηρίαν ἱεουργοῦσα καὶ τελειωτάτην αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀνάστασιν ἔσεσθαι διαγγέλλουσα, “She sanctifies the whole of the human being [*sc.* body and soul, mentioned immediately beforehand] and sacredly performs *its holistic salvation*, and announces that *its resurrection will be most complete*.” The resurrection can be complete only if it includes the restoration of the soul, which means its purification from evil.

The ontological premises of the restoration of all creatures to God are found in *DN* 4,23–26. Against the theoretical background of the ontological non-subsistence of evil, which does not exist but is a lack (ἐλλειψις), Ps. Dionysius demonstrates that no creature is evil by nature—as Origen had

<sup>123</sup> See my “Love” in the English edition of *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico*, ed. A. Di Berardino, forthcoming in Chicago from InterVarsity. On Ps. Dionysius’s notion of love see also, at least, J. Rist, “A Note on Eros and Agape in Ps. Dionysius,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 20 (1966) 235–243; C. De Vogel, “Greek Cosmic Love and the Christian Love of God,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 35 (1981) 57–81; P. Podolak, “L’amore divino nella tradizione platonica e nello Ps. Dionigi Areopagita,” *Adamantius* 14 (2008) 311–328. On love as pivotal even in Ps. Dionysius’s ecclesiology see S. Panagopoulos, “Love and Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Denys the Areopagite,” *Theologia* 80 (2009) 5–36.

argued forcefully against Gnosticism—, either demons or souls, or irrational animals: “in the whole of nature” there exists no evil. If demons were evil by nature, they would not derive from the Good, and therefore would not even exist. But they were good at the beginning, they possess a “good essence” or “nature” (ἀγαθὴν οὐσίαν), and they are good in that they exist. They have become evil in that “they have ceased to possess and exert the divine goods.” For them, too, evil is a perversion of their own nature. But evil is unstable (ἄστατον) and cannot, as a consequence, endure forever. For stability is a characteristic of Good alone.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, the wicked will not be such forever, nor will they cease to exist—a tenet of Origen’s ontology, who used it in his argument against the ontological destruction of the devil and for his final conversion. Evil, as Ps. Dionysius repeats, is a perversion (παράτροπή) of their nature.

In *MT* 7.4, p. 125 Heidl–Ritter,<sup>125</sup> Ps. Dionysius mentions the intercessory prayer for the dead, that they may obtain the remission of their sins and be received in paradise; more than once, in this context, God is called “the Goodness of the divine power” and Ps. Dionysius observes, on the basis of Scripture, that nobody is free from sin.<sup>126</sup> This goodness (ἀγαθότης, *bonitas*) is the agent of restoration for Origen, Augustine, and other supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis. It is true that in *EH* 7.3 Ps. Dionysius warns, on the basis of Scripture, that “everyone will receive what he deserves,” and therefore the priest must not pray for the wicked that they may not receive what they deserve. But the retribution of sins “up to the last coin,” with no discount, was certainly admitted by decided supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis, such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. The fact that everyone will receive what he deserves does not at all exclude that, after the due retribution, the eventual apokatastasis can take place. The same is the case with *DN* 4.35, in which Ps. Dionysius refutes the assumption that

<sup>124</sup> Τὸ γὰρ αἰεὶ ταῦτόν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἴδιον.

<sup>125</sup> G. Heil–A.M. Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiacum II: De coelesti hierarchia, de ecclesiastica hierarchia, de mystica theologia, epistulae* (Berlin, 1991).

<sup>126</sup> Ἡ μὲν οὖν εὐχὴ τῆς θεαρχικῆς ἀγαθότητος δεῖται πάντα μὲν ἀφείναι τὰ δι’ ἀνθρωπίνην ἀσθένειαν ἡμαρτημένα τῷ κεκοιμημένῳ. Ibid. p. 127 Heidl–Ritter: Ἐπιτεύχεται γὰρ ὧν αἰτεῖ θειοτάτων δώρων, ἀποδεχομένης αὐτὸν τῆς θεαρχικῆς ἀγαθότητος; ibid. 7.7: τοῖς δόσιως βιώσαντιν ἢ φανοτάτη καὶ θεία ζωὴ κατ’ ἀξίαν ὑπὸ τῶν δικαιοτάτων ζυγῶν ἀντιδίδοται παρορώσεως ἀγαθότητι τῆς θεαρχικῆς φιλανθρωπίας τὰς ἐγγενομένας αὐτοῖς ἐξ ἀνθρωπίνης ἀσθενείας κηλίδας, ἐπεὶ περ “οὐδεὶς,” ὡς τὰ λόγια φησιν, “καθαρός ἀπὸ ρύπου.” Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ὁ ἱεράρχης οἶδεν ἐπηγγελμένα πρὸς τῶν ἀληθῶν λογίων, αἰτεῖ δὲ αὐτὰ γενέσθαι. Ibid. p. 128: Οὐ γὰρ ἂν ὁ ἱεράρχης [...] ἐξήτει ποτὲ τὰ μὴ τῷ θεῷ προσφιλέστατα καὶ πρὸς αὐτοῦ δοθήσεσθαι θειωδῶς ἐπηγγελμένα. Διὸ τοῖς ἀνιέροις οὐκ ἐπεύχεται ταῦτα κεκοιμημένοις.

“weakness should not be punished; rather, it should be forgiven.” He refutes it by arguing that everyone has been given by God free will in abundance, so as to be able to reject evil. In this case, too, Ps. Dionysius is perfectly in line with Origen, who also thought that each one has free will and must necessarily experience all the consequences of its use, good if the use was good, or bad if it was bad, with no condonation or forgiveness or excuse. Again, this conviction conflicts in nothing with the possibility of an eventual restoration of all.

In respect to Ps. Dionysius’s adherence to the apokatastasis theory, a further terminological analysis is also significant.<sup>127</sup> In his work the Platonic vocabulary is superimposed on that of the Bible. Ps. Dionysius seems fully aware of the various meanings that αἰώνιος may bear in Scripture, since he alerts readers to the fact that in the Bible the term does not always mean “eternal,” that is, “non-generated” and “incorruptible.” Indeed, on p. 216,14 he notes that “in Scripture sometimes there is mention of an αἰών that is in time and of an αἰώνιος time,” in which case this term refers to a distant time, remote, or indeterminate, long, but not eternal: “therefore, one must not consider things that are called αἰώνια in Scripture to be simply coeternal with God [συναίδια θεῶ], who is rather prior to every αἰών” (this point, that things αἰώνια are not coeternal with God, will be taken over by Eriugena<sup>128</sup>). The meaning of αἰώνιος is not determinable apart from its context, and it changes in accord with what it modifies. Like Origen and Didymus after him,<sup>129</sup> Dionysius is fully conscious of the multiplicity of meanings attached to αἰώνιος in Scripture, which are determined by the context; this is why he explicitly warns that this term does not always mean “eternal”: like Origen, whom he had read, he is well aware that, if the Bible speaks, for instance, of αἰώνιον punishment and fire, this does not mean that they are “eternal.”

István Perczel considers the *Corpus Dionysianum* to belong to fifth-century Origenism<sup>130</sup> and to be profoundly influenced by Evagrius<sup>131</sup> and directly by Origen himself. The latter point would confirm my suspicion that the character of Hierotheus and his *Hymn on Love* might conceal an allusion to Origen and his work. This scholar, indeed, has demonstrated that in *DN*

<sup>127</sup> See Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new ed., 218–222.

<sup>128</sup> See below in this same chapter the section on Eriugena.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new ed., 116–129 and 138–139.

<sup>130</sup> “Ps.Dionysius and Palestinian Origenism,” in *The Sabaité Heritage in the Orthodox Church*, ed. J. Patrich (Louvain, 2001) 261–282.

<sup>131</sup> “Une théologie de lumière: Denys l’Aréopagite et Evagre le Pontique,” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 45 (1999) 79–120.

1,4 the characterisation of God as “Monad and Henad” derives, not from Proclus, but from Origen (*Princ.* 1,1,6).<sup>132</sup> Only rarely does Proclus place Monad and Henad on the same plane, and *never* in reference to the First Principle, whereas Origen in *Princ.* 1,1,6 defines God precisely as μονάς and ἐνός, two terms that are preserved in Greek by Rufinus in his translation; in *Dial. cum Her.* 4,4 Origen called Henad the union of the Father and the Son. Origen’s definition of God as μονάς and ἐνός is reflected in several followers of his such as Eusebius (*DE* 4,6,1, in which God the Logos is characterised by means of a “monadic and henadic” number), Evagrius (*Ep. de Fid.* 2,41–42: “The Monad and Henad indicates the simple and incomprehensible substance”; *KG* 2,3; 3,1; 4,21) and the author of the work *De Trinitate* ascribed to Didymus, in 1,15, “the henadic or monadic character of the Father’s divinity,” and 2,8,1: “One and only one is the Holy Spirit of the Henad or Monad.” Origen, in turn, derived his doctrine of God as Monad and Henad from Numenius,<sup>133</sup> whose influence on his thought is attested in Porphyry (*ap. Eus. HE* 6,19,4–8), and has been shown by Somos as well.<sup>134</sup> Numenius had taken over the Pythagorean doctrine that called God “Monad” (fr. 52: *singularitas*) and the divinity μία and μονή (fr. 2).<sup>135</sup> Elsewhere, more generally, Perczel has argued that Origen must be included among the principal sources of

<sup>132</sup> “God as Monad and Henad: Dionysius the Areopagite and the Περὶ ἀρχῶν,” in *Origeniana VIII*, 1193–1209.

<sup>133</sup> See Ramelli, “Origen, Patristic Philosophy,” 217–263. On Numenius I limit myself to referring to P. van Nuffelen, *Rethinking the Gods* (Cambridge, 2011) 72–84; on his allegoresis see Ramelli, “The Philosophical Stance.”

<sup>134</sup> R. Somos, “Origen and Numenius,” *Adamantius* 6 (2000) 51–69.

<sup>135</sup> There are also some parallels between Proclus and Ps. Dionysius, highlighted by H.D. Saffrey, “New Objective Links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus,” in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. D.J. O’Meara (Norfolk, VA, 1982), 65–74 = “Nouveaux liens objectifs entre le Pseudo-Denys et Proclus,” in Id., *Recherches sur le néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris, 1990), and some paraphrases of Proclus in Ps. Dionysius (Perczel, “Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology” and “God as Monad,” 1194–1195), but the similarities between the two (who also have different references, pagan or Christian; shifts in meaning, differences of synonyms, differences in order etc.) do not necessarily demonstrate that Ps. Dionysius depends on Proclus: Proclus might rather depend on Dionysius, or both might depend on common sources. Surer is, instead, the dependence of Dionysius on Origen, Plotinus, and Porphyry. The dependence on Proclus is uncertain also according to Schäfer, *The Philosophy of Dionysius*, who does not think that the discussion on evil in *DN* 4 depends on Proclus. Schäfer’s opinion is that Ps. Dionysius was an original thinker, although he did know Neoplatonism. There are other examples that demonstrate the influence of common Christian sources on both Proclus and Ps. Dionysius, so it is unnecessary in these cases to postulate an influence of Proclus on Ps. Dionysius. One instance is the use of ἀνηγγμένως, which Proclus took from Didymus, just as Ps. Dionysius did. On this linguistic example see Tzamalikos, *The Real Cassian*, who offers other examples of Proclus’s liability to Christian authors.



Ps. Dionysius, and especially Origen's philosophical masterpiece, his most theoretically bold work. For instance, at the beginning of the second chapter of his *De Divinis Nominibus* Ps. Dionysius paraphrases *Princ.* 1,2,13;<sup>136</sup> in another passage, he paraphrases a bit from Origen's commentary on John, and, according to Perczel, calls Origen "divine Bartholomew."<sup>137</sup> Other examples indicate that Origen's writings, especially his *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, are called *θεολογία* in the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, and Origen *θεολόγος*.<sup>138</sup> A further example of Origen's influence on Ps. Dionysius I would add is the above-mentioned concept of divine love not only as *ἀγάπη*, but also as *ἔρως*. Indeed, Origen's influence on this score is also evident in Patristic thinkers who followed him, such as Nyssen and Methodius.<sup>139</sup>

It seems to me significant that the aforementioned passage on God as Monad and Henad, in which Ps. Dionysius shows to be inspired directly from Origen (and probably intends to allude to Origen as well), is precisely a passage in which he develops the doctrine of apokatastasis as a restoration to unity and to the image and likeness of God, as Origen and Nyssen understood it. If Dionysius speaks in the present, as he often does, it is not because the apokatastasis is taking place now, but because God is beyond time:

You will find, so to say, that the whole *hymnology of the 'theologians'* prepares the divine names in a revelatory and hymnic way according to the beneficent *procession of the principle of the divinity*. For this reason, practically *in the whole theological doctrine* we see that the principle of the divinity is celebrated as *Monad and Henad* [μονάς καὶ ἐνάς], because of the simplicity and unity of its supernatural indivisibility, by which *we are unified as by a unifying power*, and by a *supermundane act of reunion of our divisible alterities we are assembled in a monad that is an image of God* [θεοειδής] *and in a union that is in the likeness of God* [θεομίμητος]. (DN 1,4)

The reference to the "theologians" who expressed themselves in "hymns" seems to be a reference to Origen primarily, both for the clue provided by the quotation "μονάς καὶ ἐνάς" (which, being a quotation from Origen, implies that "the theological doctrine" is the Origenian doctrine) and for the implicit link with the author of the *Hymns on Love*, Hierotheus, who, I suspect, might

<sup>136</sup> I. Perczel, "Le Pseudo-Denys, lecteur d'Origène," in *Origeniana VII*, 673–710; idem, "Once Again on Dionysius the Areopagite and Leontius of Byzantium," in Boiadjev–Kapriev–Speer, *Dionysius-Rezeption*, 41–85.

<sup>137</sup> I. Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology," in *Proclus et la théologie platonicienne*, eds. A.P. Segonds–C. Steel (Leuven, 2000), 491–532, *praes.* 516–519.

<sup>138</sup> I. Perczel, "Théologiens et magiciens dans le Corpus dionysien," *Adamantius* 7 (2001) 54–75.

<sup>139</sup> See my "Love."

be a counterpart of Origen and his commentary on the Song of Songs. In *Princ.* 2,1,1 Origen calls *unitas*–ένάς also the original unity of creation, and in the Dionysian passage the unity of the Henad is applied precisely to the original unity which is restored in the eventual apokatastasis, according to the assimilation of ἀρχή and τέλος which is reflected in the movements of μονή–πρόοδος–ἐπιστροφή. Ps. Dionysius is saying that God's unifying power will restore humans to a state of unity and to the image and likeness of God, as they were created in the beginning (Gen 1:26). The creatural Monad and Henad will be like God's Monad and Henad.

The "unifying power" through which the divinity is said to operate is probably the νοῦς, as it results from *DN* 7,2, in which the νοερά δύναμις is indivisible, image of God, and tends to realise the unity. Thus, the intellect as unifying power realises the unity of the soul by restoring it to its original state of image and likeness of God through the "reunion of our divisible alterities," that is, in a Platonic language, of all the corporeal qualities and the movements of the souls that are related to them. This is remindful of the process explained by Nyssen, another Origenian, in *De anima*, and surely of the unifying role of the intellect in Evagrius's system. In this Christian context, the intellectual unifying power coincides with Christ-Logos and Nous, who is also the unifying agent in John 11:52 and 17:11.21–23, in which Christ prays the Father for the perfecting of humans in unity.<sup>140</sup> Origen read these passages precisely in reference to the eventual apokatastasis in *Prin* 3,5,4: "the children of God who had fallen or were dispersed will be gathered again into unity [...] because all rational creatures are of one and the same nature." In line with this conception, Dionysius, commenting on the *epinoia* of Christ "Peace," states that he is "the only and universal Principle and Cause who, superior to all beings in indivisibility, determines and limits all, with keys that hold together the various separated beings." What is more, in *EH* 1,1 Christ is said to be the νοῦς that "*unifies* the many alterities and makes us *perfect* in the *divine life* that is an image of the Henad [εἰς ἐνοειδῆ καὶ θεῖαν ἀποτελειώσας ζωὴν]." This forms a perfect *Ringkomposition* with the above-mentioned initial passage in *DN* 1,4, in which God is described as μονάς καὶ ένάς and the human beings are said to participate in God's light in the *telos*, thanks to an impassible and immaterial *nous* in a union that transcends every intellection with an effusion of ultra-brilliant rays. This describes apokatastasis as ἐνωσις. In the Syriac translation by Sergius

<sup>140</sup> See the volume devoted to John 13–17 in *Novum Testamentum Patristicum*, in preparation.

of Reshaina, in which ἔνωσις is rather a “fusion” or “confusion,” this even becomes a description of apokatastasis in the form condemned in 553 CE in the Constantinople Council, Anathema 14, which echoes Evagrius *KG* 2,17. The anathema is directed against those who say “that all rational beings will form one and the same henad [ἐνᾷς μίᾳ] [...] and that in the apokatastasis of which some people babble there will be only pure intellects just as in the preexistence of which they blather.” Both the doctrine referred to in this anathema and the Dionysian passage have much in common with Evagrius. The whole of this tradition is Origenian, even though the Origenism condemned at Constantinople was, as I shall show, a radicalisation and distortion of Origen’s own thought. In this light, it may indeed be Origen and his tradition that Ps. Dionysius in *DN* 1,4 calls “the theological tradition.”

Another remarkable passage is *DN* 7, 204, where God is described as Redemption: “If any being inclines toward confusion and disorder and comes to be in a situation of inferiority vis-à-vis the fullness of what is good for it,” then God, qua Redemption, “redeems it from that πᾶθος, from that weakness, and from that lack.” For God, “as a Father, has compassion for the weakness and redeems from evil” and “restores to beauty even the good that was lost”; God, who is the Good, “restores the creatures from evil to the Good,” and “fills” the lack that evil is, and “orders” the disorder that evil brings about. Evil is a disorder, a weakness, and a deprivation of Good, but God fills this lack and orders this disorder in all the creatures that are in need of this. This is an idea that is very similar to that found in the passage of (the still Origenian) Augustine in *De moribus* on which I have commented: *Dei bonitas omnia deficientia sic ordinat donec ad id recurrant unde defecerunt*.<sup>141</sup> Both Ps. Dionysius and Augustine rely on Origen’s tradition. The former too is describing apokatastasis. If he uses the present—like Augustine—it is because the Godhead is beyond time; it always redeems its creatures from evil, and it will definitely do so in the end.

In this framework, in relation to the possible presence of the doctrine of apokatastasis in Ps. Dionysius, it is remarkable that he affirms that he had extensively written, also on the basis of numerous biblical quotations, about the universal peace and restoration that were foreseen from eternity and will occur when, by means of Christ, God will be “all in all.” Ps. Dionysius had treated all of this in his lost Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις, which, according to his own statement in *DN* 1,1, preceded the *De divinis nominibus*. This is

<sup>141</sup> See above, at the beginning of the present chapter, the section on Augustine.

the passage (*DN* 11,5 [p. 221 Suchla]) in which he speaks of the contents of his lost treatise:

What could be said of Christ's love for humanity, a love that gives peace in profusion [εἰρηνοχύτου φιλανθρωπίας]? Jesus who operates *all in all* [τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι ἐνεργοῦντος] and *realises an unspeakable peace* [ποιούντος εἰρήνην ἄρρητον] *established from eternity* [ἐξ αἰῶνος προωρισμένην], and *reconciles us to him* [ἀποκαταλλάσσοντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ] in spirit, and, *through himself and in himself, to the Father* [δι' ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἐν ἑαυτῷ τῷ πατρὶ]. Of these wonderful gifts I have abundantly and sufficiently spoken [ἱκανῶς εἴρηται] in the *Theological Outlines*, where to our testimony is joined that of the holy inspiration of Scriptures (or: of the sages [λογίων]).

The reference to 1Cor 15:28—Origen's, Gregory of Nyssa's, and Evagrius's favourite passage in support of their apokatastasis doctrine—makes it all the more probable that Ps. Dionysius in his lost work treated the theory of apokatastasis in terms close to those in which it is described in Gregory Nyssen's *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*. Moreover, like Origen and Gregory, he supported this doctrine by means of Scriptural quotations and interpretations. It is probable that λογίων in the passage I have quoted derives from λόγια, meaning Scriptures, but it might derive from λόγοι as well, in which case the reference would be to earlier theologians, among whom Origen was prominent along with Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius. If Ps. Dionysius wrote that work, I wonder whether it is by accident that it is lost. But even in case the Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις never existed—which anyway is not proven—, it is all the same significant per se that Ps. Dionysius wanted to make it known that he had treated these themes at length in a whole work. In this connection, it is also meaningful that in *DN* 9,5 Ps. Dionysius relates the situation described by 1Cor 15:28, God's being “all in all,” both to “the providence of God” and to “the salvation of all beings.” Ps. Dionysius states that “in his providence, God is close to every being,” clearly continually assisting each of them until the *telos*, “and (thus) becomes ‘all in all.’” This takes place διὰ τὴν πάντων σωτηρίαν, which is at the same time the preservation of all beings now and their eventual salvation. God's action is timeless, now and in the *telos*, because it is beyond time, and the *telos* will be a passage to timelessness for all the creation. What will strongly characterise the *telos* and differentiate it from the present *quad nos* will be the eviction of evil, which will be reduced to nothing, that is, its ontological nature.

1Cor 15:28, which Ps. Dionysius echoes in two more passages (*DN* 7,3 and 1,7), is a *Pauline* verse. Charles Stang<sup>142</sup> draws on von Balthasar's insight that

<sup>142</sup> *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: “No longer I”* (Oxford, 2012).

the author of the *Corpus Dionysianum* took on the identity of Dionysius the Areopagite in order to deny himself, in the spirit of self-annihilation; this, Stang adds, is Paul's spirit.<sup>143</sup> His reading of Ps. Dionysius against the backdrop of Paul is, I find, enlightening, for at least three reasons. 1) It confirms that the author wrote within the Christian tradition (something I am convinced of, against recent attempts to revive the hypothesis of a "pagan" author of the Corpus). 2) It perfectly fits with the identity of the author as an Origenian (something I suspect more and more strongly), as Paul was Origen's "hero" and main inspirer in a multitude of major respects. 3) What is most relevant to my present investigation, if Paul is, through Origen, the main inspirer of Ps. Dionysius, it is even more probable that Ps. Dionysius supported the apokatastasis doctrine, which was upheld not only by Origen but by Paul himself in passages that Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and others, including Ps. Dionysius, expressly referred to universal restoration (1 Cor 15:28 etc.)

The work *Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις* is expressly named in nine passages belonging to the *Corpus Dionysianum*: six from *De divinis nominibus* and three from *Theologia mystica*. In *DN* 1,1, as I have mentioned, Ps. Dionysius affirms that he wrote this treatise (*DN*) "shortly after the *Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις*." In the same work, on p. 116,7 Suchla, he refers to the discussion that in the *Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις* he devoted to the absolute transcendence and ineffability of God, to whom he applies the term *αὐτοαγαθόν*, which Origen had already applied to God the Father. Origen followed Numenius on his score, and Plotinus did the same.<sup>144</sup> Ps. Dionysius in the above-mentioned passage presented the Trinity as a triune Unity (like Nyssen, he ascribed the characteristics of Plotinus's One not only to the Father, but to the whole Trinity): "But, as we said when we were expounding the *Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις*, the One, the unknown, who is beyond Being and is the Good itself [*αὐτὸ ἀγαθόν*], that is, the triune Henad [*τριαδικὴ Ἑνάς*], which is all divine and good in the same way, is both ineffable and impossible to conceive." On the same

<sup>143</sup> That Paul is a model of mystical experience for Ps. Dionysius was argued by Y. De Andia, "Moïse et Paul, modèles de l'expérience mystique chez Grégoire de Nysse et Denys l'Aréopagite," *Studia Patristica* 48 (2010) 189–204.

<sup>144</sup> See my "Origen, Patristic Philosophy." On Numenius's protology see J. Dillon, "Numenius: Some Ontological Questions," in *Greek and Roman Philosophy 100 BC–200 AD*, eds. R. Sorabji–R.W. Sharples (London, 2007), 397–402, and on Numenius's influence on Origen see A. Kritikos, "Platonism and Principles in Origen," *ibid.* 403–417. On the absolute transcendence and unknowability of the divine Principle in Proclus (and Eriugena, who was profoundly influenced by Ps. Dionysius), see D. Carabine, "A Thematic Investigation of the Neoplatonic Concepts of Vision and Unity," *Hermathena* 157 (1994) 43–56.

line, on p. 122,11 Ps. Dionysius refers again to his work now lost, saying that in it he maintained that the names of God must be ascribed to the three Persons of the Trinity indivisibly, since the Trinity is a Superunited Henad (ἡ ὑπερηνωμένη ἐνὰς). Again on the same line, Ps. Dionysius also informs (ibid. p. 125,14) that in the Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις he described God the Trinity as transcending the Being and the Good itself and as the cause of Being and of all goods.<sup>145</sup> In his lost work Ps. Dionysius also explained the reasons for the distinctions and the unity among the Persons of the Trinity, even within the tight limits of human knowledge of the divine. This results from p. 130,5.<sup>146</sup> On p. 221,1, finally, the above-quoted passage is found which attests that Ps. Dionysius treated apokatastasis in his Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις. From this passage it is also clear that for Ps. Dionysius, just as for Origen and Nyssen, the process of apokatastasis rests on Christ and, from the scriptural point of view, is grounded especially in 1 Cor 15:28, and moreover in Acts 3:21, where the notion is expressed that universal apokatastasis was established by God and foreseen ἀπ' αἰῶνος, an idea that is taken up by Ps. Dionysius. The latter, like Origen and Nyssen, also adduced other scriptural or Patristic supports to buttress this theory.

In *TM* 3,1 (p. 146,1–9) Dionysius affirms that in his Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις he had discussed the main points of cataphatic theology, on the unity and trinity of God, the three Persons of the Trinity, the generation of the Son, his assumption of human nature, and other issues, always basing himself on Scripture.<sup>147</sup> Soon after, Ps. Dionysius reveals that in another lost

<sup>145</sup> "Therefore, what is unified belongs to the whole divinity, as is argued in the Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις on the basis of very many reasons, drawn from Scriptures/from the sages [λογίων]: that it transcends the Good [ὑπεραγαθόν], the divinity [ὑπέρθεον], the essence/being [ὑπερούσιον], life, wisdom, and all that which is characterised by an ascending abstraction [ὑπεροχική ἀφαρέσεως]; along with these, the causative epithets are also placed, such as the Good, the Beautiful, Being, life-giver, wise, and all those epithets with which the cause of all goods is called, due to all its goods, which fit the Good."

<sup>146</sup> "As for the causes of these motives of unity and distinction, which we have found in Scriptures (or: in the wise), and that become God, I have expounded them in the *Theological Outlines*, treating separately each of them as far as possible, in part explaining them according to the true Logos, relating their sacred and pure meaning to the clear visions of Scripture (or: the wise), in part unified by the mystics according to the divine tradition beyond the intellectual activity. For all that which is divine, even what has been manifested, can be known only by participation, but in itself, how it is according to its principle and constitution, this transcends (our) intellect and every essence and knowledge." The idea itself of "becoming God" and "being worthy of God" is typical of Origen's way of arguing.

<sup>147</sup> "In the *Theological Outlines* I sang the main points of cataphatic theology, how the divine and good nature is called one, forming a unity [ἐνική], and how it is called triune [τριαδική]; what is paternity in it and what sonship; what theological discourse concerning

work, his *Symbolic Theology*, he provided an allegorical exegesis of biblical anthropomorphisms attributed to God: “in the *Symbolic Theology* the transpositions of sense-perceptible characteristics to the divine: the meaning of forms ascribed to God, of shapes, parts of the bodies, and organs that are ascribed to him, of places and worlds, of episodes of anger, sorrow, rage [...] how curses should be understood [...] and all the other forms that have been attributed to God in a symbolic sense.” Origen explained biblical references to God’s anger, threats, and destructions, in the same way as Ps. Dionysius does, and reconciled them with the doctrine of apokatastasis.

Then, a revealing passage explains the reasons why the Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις were more concise than the *Symbolic Theology* (ἐχρῆν τὰς Θεολογικὰς ὑποτυπώσεις [...] βραχυλογώτερα εἶναι τῆς Συμβολικῆς θεολογίας): it is because they proceeded from on high and from the beginning (ἄνω), from God who is the first Principle, down to creatures and their existence in time, until “the last things,” τὰ ἔσχατα, an expression that, as I have shown, is very probably to be understood in an eschatological sense.<sup>148</sup> Therefore, in his Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις Ps. Dionysius began with God as first ἀρχή, just as Origen did in his Περὶ Ἀρχῶν, and arrived, like him, at the eventual apokatastasis. Moreover, with the latter Ps. Dionysius dealt within the framework of theology and Christology, as in Nyssen’s *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*. It is the investigation into the nature of God, insofar as possible, and into the “gifts of Christ” that allows theologians to foresee what the last things will be like for God’s creatures. Again, even in the hypothesis—which is not demonstrated—that the Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις never existed, it would still be highly significant that Ps. Dionysius indicates their structure in the terms I have pointed out, echoing the structure of Origen’s masterpiece, including the treatment of eschatological realities.

The title Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις is cited ten times in Byzantine authors, nine of which in quotations of passages in which Ps. Dionysius mentioned it.<sup>149</sup> Nicephorus Callistus *HE* 2,20, lists this work among the lost writings

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the Spirit means; how from the immaterial Good, deprived of parts, lights sprang off, from the heart of Goodness, and how these have remained inseparable from the eternal *manentia*, coeternal with the bud, *manentia* of the Father in himself, *manentia* of the Father in himself and the Son in himself, and of the Father and the Son reciprocally; how superessential Jesus has substantiated himself with the truth of the human nature, and all the rest that is sung in the *Theological Outlines*, revealed by Scriptures / by the sages [λογίων].”

<sup>148</sup> Κάκει μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄνω πρὸς τὰ ἔσχατα κατιῶν ὁ λόγος.

<sup>149</sup> Iohannes VI Cantac. *II Refutatio Prochori Cydonii*, 9,71; Greg. Acind. *Refutatio magna*, 1,53; Philoth. Cocc. *Antirrhethici contra Gregoram*, 5,57.119.269.455.464; Ioseph Caloth. *Orationes antirrhethicae contra Acindynum et Barlaam*, 2, 533-544.

of Dionysius. Psellus, too, in *Or.* 1,784, uses the expression Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις, but it is uncertain whether he refers, directly or indirectly, to the work of Ps. Dionysius. Determining this would be all the more interesting in that this expression appears precisely in the context of the evaluation of Origen's thought, which is said to have given rise to all heresies: "Their writings also include some expressions characterised by piety [εὐσεβείας] and Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις [...]. The famous Origen, a contemporary of the philosopher Porphyry, was remarkably advanced in Christian theology, and also embraced the Christian life, but originated all heresies." If Psellus with the words Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις is referring to the lost work of the *Corpus Dionysianum*, then the work of Ps. Dionysius would be presented as belonging to the *Origenian* tradition. Psellus even seems to refer to a work that in his time was not lost, which would be a remarkable indicator. As I shall illustrate, in the first Syriac tradition not only are the Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις not referred to as lost, but perhaps they were also read.

The *Corpus Dionysianum*, according to Perczel, was composed in an Origenistic milieu, in which pseudonymity was used as a prudential measure.<sup>150</sup> But the Corpus acquired soon an important position among Christian "orthodox" texts. It is interesting that the author of the Corpus (who, even in case he was not a radical Origenist, was surely an Origenian) chose to ascribe his ideas to Dionysius the Areopagite. In this way, he intended to present the Origenian thought, including the theory of apokatastasis, as the true Christian philosophy. In the light of the Syriac roots of Ps. Dionysius<sup>151</sup> and the connection with Sudhaili, one also understands the immediate and outstanding reception that the *Corpus Dionysianum* had in Western Syriac Christianity. It was soon translated into Syriac by the above-mentioned Sergius of Resh'aina, an Evagrian Origenist, who also wrote a substantial introduction to his translation. Another version was subsequently provided by Phocas (VII–VIII centuries).<sup>152</sup> Sergius's translation, according to Perczel, is closer to the original Greek than the Greek *textus receptus* available to us and ultimately based on the edition of John of Scythopolis,

<sup>150</sup> Perczel, *God as Monad*, 1209.

<sup>151</sup> That he was in Constantinople is argued, on liturgical bases, by P.L. Gavriluk, "Did Ps.-Dionysius Live in Constantinople?," *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008) 505–514, and is also suggested by Tzamalikos, *The Real Cassian*: he thinks that the writings of Ps. Dionysius were composed in Constantinople in the monastery of the Akoimetoï, where Cassian the Sabaite also met their author.

<sup>152</sup> See J.M. Hornus, "Le corpus dionysien en syriaque," *Parole de l'Orient* 1 (1970) 69–93.



who also commented on the *Corpus Dionysianum* in scholia;<sup>153</sup> indeed, the sixth-century manuscript itself that contains Sergius's translation is the most ancient manuscript that includes the *Corpus Dionysianum*, anterior to all Greek manuscripts available to us.<sup>154</sup> For the Greek manuscripts only stem from the ninth century onwards—the time of Eriugena, I note, who translated the *Corpus* into Latin.<sup>155</sup> Perczel<sup>156</sup> expounds the results of his comparative analysis of our Greek text and Sergius's translation, which lead him to the conclusion that the text from which Sergius translated was more openly Origenistic than ours (he claims that almost all the doctrines condemned in 553 CE are to be found in the Syriac version, but he concentrates on one point concerning the pre-existence of souls in an initial henad and on two concerning apokatastasis in a final henad, with an identification with Christ and the suppression of individual identities and bodies), and much clearer, as the Syriac is vis-à-vis today's Greek. The last point was also noted by Sebastian Brock.

Now, Sergius suggests that Ps. Dionysius's Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις, in which apokatastasis was treated, did exist, rather than being a literary fiction. In his introduction to his translation of the *Corpus*, ch. 117, he mentions this work along with the *De divinis nominibus* as the most important work by Dionysius, in that he discussed the highest science therein.<sup>157</sup> Just as it is the case with other Ps. Dionysian writings now lost that he cites in the same passage, Sergius speaks as though he had read the Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις. If Sergius read this work, however, why did he not translate it? Or possibly he did, but his translation was lost at an early date, just like the Greek original. In this case, the early disappearance of this work in both the Greek and the Syriac traditions could hardly be accidental, and one might wonder whether the teaching of apokatastasis therein played a role in this disappearance. It might even be the case that the Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις were never com-

<sup>153</sup> PG 4; P. Rorem–J. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>154</sup> Cfr. I. Perczel, "The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius," in *Re-Thinking Dionysius*, 27–41: 29–30.

<sup>155</sup> See below in this very same chapter, the section on Eriugena.

<sup>156</sup> Both in "The Earliest Syriac Reception" and in "Ps. Dionysius and Palestinian Origenism."

<sup>157</sup> Ms. Paris, BN Syr. 384, fol. 52<sup>r</sup> = ed. P. Sherwood, "Mimro de Serge de Reshayna sur la vie spirituelle," *L'Orient Syrien* 6 (1961) 95–115, 121–156: 149: "Finally, in his *Theological Outlines* and in his treatise *On the Interpretation of Divine Names* he has divinely expounded the teaching of the most sublime knowledge and the most exalted contemplation of the hidden Substance itself."

pletely lost, but simply transmitted under a different name. According to an alluring but not fully demonstrated hypothesis of Perczel, they were transmitted as the *De Trinitate* (PG 39,384B–860C) ascribed to Didymus, not by accident a faithful Origenian.<sup>158</sup> Indeed, the *Corpus Dionysianum* and the *De Trinitate* rely on the same passages of Proclus. In the only extant manuscript of *De Trinitate* the initial and final leaves are missing. Should this work be identifiable with the Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις, it ought to be considered that in the latter the eschatological section was probably situated at the end. Most recently, Panayiotis Tzamalikos has hypothesised that *De Trinitate* was in fact composed by the sixth-century Origenian monk and abbot Cassian the Sabaite.<sup>159</sup> It is interesting that, even though Tzamalikos does not accept the identification of *De Trinitate* with a work of Ps. Dionysius, nevertheless he finds in it many affinities with the *Corpus Dionysianum*, especially on the linguistic plane; he even hypothesises that Cassian the Sabaite met Ps. Dionysius.

In the *De Trinitate*, whoever its author may be, Origenian motives are found—such as the idea that Christ took up not only a human body, but also a human soul,<sup>160</sup> and that only the Trinity is incorporeal, while all creatures, even angels, have a body (2,4,3)—and, what is most relevant to the present research, hints of the doctrine of apokatastasis, which seems to have been present in the Θεολογικαὶ ὑποτυπώσεις, are to be found as well, even in the

<sup>158</sup> Perczel “Denys lecteur”; Idem, “The Reception,” 32, announces the future publication of further proofs. According to R.A. Arthur, *Ps. Dionysius As Polemicist* (London, 2008), chs. 4–5, Ps. Dionysius’s *De caelesti hierarchia* is not a source of, but a response to, Sudhaili’s *Book of Hierotheus*, which was considered to be too Evagrian and was written by a Miaphysite bishop of the entourage of Severus of Antioch. *De Trinitate* ascribed to Didymus: Book 1 ed. and tr. by J. Hoenscheid (Meisenheim, 1975); Book 2 ed. and tr. by I. Seiler (Meisenheim, 1975) in two vols. The attribution to Didymus was disputed by L. Doutreleau, “Le *De Trinitate* est-il l’œuvre de Didyme l’aveugle?” *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses* 45 (1957) 514–557, on the basis of exegetical divergences, then by L. Béranger, “Sur deux énigmes du *De Trinitate* de Didyme l’Aveugle,” *ibid.* 51 (1963) 255–267, who observed that the references to a *De Spiritu Sancto* therein are not to Didymus’s homonymous treatise, but to Book 2 of the *De Trinitate* itself, and A.I.C. Heron, *Studies in the Trinitarian Writings of Didymus the Blind: His Authorship of the Adversus Eunomium IV–V and the De Trinitate* (Tübingen, 1972); also Idem, “Some Sources Used in *De Trinitate* Ascribed to Didymus the Blind,” in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of H. Chadwick*, ed. R. Williams (Cambridge, 1989), 173–181. These arguments were reinforced by M. Simonetti, “Didymiana,” *Vetere Christianorum* 21 (1984) 129–155, and “Ancora sulla paternità didimiana del *De Trinitate*,” *Augustinianum* 36 (1996) 377–387, on the basis of passages in which the *De Trinitate* is at odds with Didymus’s *De Spiritu Sancto*.

<sup>159</sup> In *The Real Cassian*.

<sup>160</sup> Book 3, PG 39,829,46. τὴν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ Πατρός καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀσύγκριτον φύσιν, καὶ τὴν ἐκ Παρθένου καὶ κατ’ αὐτὴν τελείαν καὶ ἐνοειδῆ σάρκωσιν καὶ ψύχωσιν.

preserved part. For instance, special emphasis is placed on the universal reconciliation of all through Christ to God.<sup>161</sup> The strategy is the same as Gregory of Nyssa's in *In Illud*: apokatastasis is supported in the context of an anti-"Arian" polemic. The role of Christ in this is emphasised: everything is "reconciled" and "pacified" by Christ, who has creatures return to God and the knowledge of God (Book 3, PG 39,829,46).<sup>162</sup> It is notable that the author of *De Trinitate*'s interpretation of 1 Cor 15:28 (in Book 3, PG 39,893,2 ff.) is the same as Gregory of Nyssa's, and, as I have demonstrated,<sup>163</sup> Gregory in turn derived it from Origen wholesale. The author of *De Trinitate*, too, refutes a subordinationistic interpretation of this verse (and at the same time, perhaps, an interpretation of it similar to that of Marcellus of Ancyra, who envisaged an end of Christ's eschatological reign);<sup>164</sup> even his observation that Christ's eventual submission should have taken place at the beginning (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἂν ὑπετέτακτο), if it were a sign of subordination, is Origen's. Both Origen and Gregory of Nyssa and the author of *De Trinitate* maintain that this eschatological submission must not be taken θεικῶς, since it does not involve the divine nature of Christ, but rather his human nature. The author of *De Trinitate* also uses the terminology of apokatastasis on the basis of the Bible (Book 1, 31,3; εἰ γὰρ ἀποκαθίστησιν, ἐν ποίᾳ αὐτοῦ βασιλείᾳ καὶ πότε συμβασιλεύσομεν αὐτῷ;). He insists on the "rectification," which in Origenian authors such as Eusebius and Marcellus is a synonym of apokatastasis, in

<sup>161</sup> 1,27,50–51: "ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησε πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν." Ἐπόμενα καὶ ταῦτα τοῖς πρόσθεν. τοῦ γὰρ πατρὸς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ τῇ φύσει τυγχάνοντος, ὡς καὶ πᾶν συγγενές ἀχώριστόν πως τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ συγγενοῦς καθέστηκεν, καὶ τῇ ὑποστάσει διέζευκται. The same is repeated in Book 3, PG 39, 829,22–24 ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησε πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι, καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς, εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. The same quotation is repeated again *ibid.* PG 39, 897, 10, and it is explained in anti-Arian Trinitarian terms: "Ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησε πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι, καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν" οὐχὶ δὲ εἰς ἄλλον· τῇ θεότητι αἰρεσιομάχοι διεσάφησαν· οὐ μόνον ὡς Υἱὸς πρὸς Πατέρα κοινωνίαν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ὡς φίλος πρὸς φίλον ἰσότητα συγκλητορίας παραχωροῦντες αὐτῷ.

<sup>162</sup> Τὸ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτόν πάντα συνεστάναι, καὶ καταλλάσσεσθαι, καὶ εἰρηνοποιεῖσθαι, εἰ μὴ τὸ διὰ τῆς ἀτρέπτου καὶ ἀναμαρτήτου δι' ἡμᾶς καὶ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐνανθρωπήσεως αὐτοῦ ἐπιστρέφεσθαι ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀκτίστου θεότητος αὐτοῦ.

<sup>163</sup> In "The Trinitarian Theology of Gregory of Nyssa in his *In Illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*: His Polemic against "Arian" Subordinationism and Apokatastasis," in *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism. Proceedings of the nth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Tübingen, 17–20.IX.2008)*, eds. V.H. Drecoll–M. Berghaus, *Vigiliae Christianae Suppl.* 106 (Leiden, 2011), 445–478.

<sup>164</sup> He blames those who "Imagine that the Only-begotten will take off his reign, and will not be an eternal king, and will submit to God as though he were an enemy of God [...] and that it is only the Father who will be 'all in all'."

Book 3, PG 39, 777,45: διὰ πίστεως καὶ λόγων καὶ ἡ ἄλλη σύμπασα κατορθοῦται ζωῇ. The return to God guarantees salvation, for instance in Book 1, 15,1,2, in which God himself is speaking: ἐπιστρέφητε πρὸς με καὶ σωθήσεσθε; likewise in 1, 19,6,6 God says: ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἰάσονται αὐτούς, the same Scriptural quotation on which Origen bases his apokatastasis doctrine; it is repeated in 1, 19,10,5. The ἐπιστροφή that coincides with healing and salvation is a voluntary return to God that has all the features of apokatastasis. Another universalistic prophecy, on the return of all people to God, is put forward in 1, 33,4,2: μνησθήσονται καὶ ἐπιστραφήσονται πρὸς κύριον πάντα τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ πᾶσαι αἱ πατριαὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν, ὅτι τοῦ κυρίου ἡ βασιλεία καὶ αὐτὸς δεσπόζει τῶν ἐθνῶν, “All people from the extremities of the earth will *remember* and *return* to the Lord; all the families of the peoples will bow before him, because the sovereignty belongs to the Lord; he is the king of the peoples.” The author comments that Lord and God are the same; Christ and the Father are one; all people will return to the Son and the Father, to the one Godhead, and will adore it. This theme of the return to God is important and often reiterated in this work.<sup>165</sup> In Book 2, 7,3,1 the author cites 1Peter: “Christ died once and for all to sins for our sake, a righteous for the sake of unrighteous people, in order to lead us to God,” and observes, again in the context of an anti-heretic polemic (κατὰ αἰρετικῆς ἐκθέσεως), that God resurrects humanity because he has created it (ὅτι δημιουργεῖ καὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγείρει), but the sanctification of humanity is even more necessary (τὸ ἀγιάσαι δημιουργῆσαι ἐστὶν καὶ ἀναγκαιότερον τοῦ δημιουργῆσαι) and it goes together with the purification and renovation of the earth itself, which was contaminated by the iniquity of humanity: δημιουργεῖ τὸ μέγα κτίσμα τὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγείρει καὶ ζωοποιεῖ καὶ εἰς οὐρανὸν ἐπιστρέφει καὶ συγκαταρρυσίαν ταῖς ἀνθρωπίναις ἀνομίαις τὴν γῆν ἀνεκαίνισε πάλιν, “he creates the human being, this great creature, raises it from the dead, and has it

<sup>165</sup> In Book 2, PG 39,632,29, the author reports Elijah's words, about the return to God: Ἐὰν ᾧσιν χίλιοι ἄγγελοι θανατηφόροι, εἰς αὐτῶν οὐ μὴ τρώσῃ ἐξ αὐτῶν, ἐὰν νοήσῃ τῇ καρδίᾳ ἐπιστραφῆναι ἐπὶ τὸν Κύριον. In Book 2 PG 39,700,20–40 he speaks of baptism in terms of a return to God (εἰς πάντα τοὺς ἐπιστρέφοντας) after the liberation from sins; its water is νόστιμον; those who are baptised are liberated τῆς παλαιᾶς στυγνότητος; it is a return of the soul to its purified and holy figure (τὸ καθαρόν καὶ ὅσιον εἶδος τῆς ψυχῆς ἀναδραμεῖν). In Book 3, PG 39,776,37 the author speaks again of the return to God (Ἐγγίσατε τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ ἐγγίει ὑμῖν· καθαρίσατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοὶ καὶ ἀγνίσατε καρδίας, διψυχοὶ) and of those who not only return themselves, but also promote the return of others: ὁ ἐπιστρέψας ἁμαρτωλὸν ἐκ πλάνης ὁδοῦ αὐτοῦ, σώσει ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἐκ θανάτου, καὶ καλύψει πλήθος ἁμαρτιῶν. In Book 3, PG 39,872,2, the alternative to the return is punishment, which, however, is not declared to be eternal. See also Book 2, PG 39, 673,28 about the return to God, who is also the creator (ἐπιστρέφει δὲ πρὸς τὸν γεννήσαντα).

return to heaven; he renovated the earth, which had ruined because of human iniquities.” In Book 1, 15,102,1 the focus is on the return to the house of the Father, which means salvation: ἀποστρέψῃ με μετὰ σωτηρίας εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρός μου, καὶ ἔσται μοι κύριος εἰς θεόν. The same quotation is found in Book 1, 15,104,4.<sup>166</sup> The interpretation of baptism as apokatastasis, as the return to the original condition before the fall, takes over an important motif typical of Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>167</sup>

ἐν τῷ βαπτίσματι ἀνακαινίζειν καὶ ἀγιάζειν τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον καὶ πρῶτον ἀνακαλεῖσθαι σχῆμα τοῦ βίου; τοῦτο γὰρ δηλοῖ καὶ τὸ συμνημονεύεσθαι αὐτό, ὡς τὸν ἀπόστολον περὶ τῶν ἐκ παλιγγενεσίας ἀρτίων γενέσθαι καὶ τοῦ παρὰ πάντα μεγίστου κατορθώματος ἀπολαῦσαι προσδοκωμένων ἀναφωνεῖν. (Book 2, 7,3,7)

God's Spirit renovates and sanctifies in baptism and calls back to the first and better condition of life. This is also indicated by the fact that it is mentioned at the same time, as the Apostle announces concerning those who expect to become perfect thanks to the regeneration and enjoy that glorious deed, the greatest of all.

The glorious deed at stake is the restoration of human beings to the Good. So far, however, there is no certainty about the accuracy of the attribution of *De Trinitate* to Ps. Dionysius.

After Sergius's translation, John of Scythopolis prepared the Greek edition of the *Corpus Dionysianum* on which all others depend; moreover, he offered a commentary which established the subsequent “orthodox” interpretation of these works. The edition that goes back to John and his circle normalised the Dionysian text to bring it closer to non-Origenian orthodoxy. Indeed, John himself in his Prologue (20D) attests that Ps. Dionysius was charged with heresy in his day. It is notable that Dionysius' Greek text was already troubled by corruptions between 536 and 548 CE. Now, even John in his commentary often shows the awareness that many passages in these works could be interpreted in an Origenian sense, an option that of course he usually endeavours to discard.

Perczel recently proposed a methodological guideline: “to examine the extant Greek text for traces of Origenist doctrines.”<sup>168</sup> I have discovered some traces of the doctrine of apokatastasis in the Corpus, not in an *Origenistic* or radical form proper, as it is the case in Sudhaili or in post-Evagrian thought,

<sup>166</sup> Ηὔξατο, φησίν, Ἰακώβ· ἐὰν ᾗ κύριος ὁ θεὸς μετ' ἐμοῦ καὶ διαφυλάξῃ με [...] καὶ ἀποστρέψῃ με μετὰ σωτηρίας εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρός μου, καὶ ἔσται μοι κύριος εἰς θεόν.

<sup>167</sup> See my “Baptism in Gregory of Nyssa's Theology.”

<sup>168</sup> “The Earliest Syriac Reception,” 35.

but in an *Origenian* form, closer to the genuine philosophy-theology of Origen himself, who is a major presence behind the Corpus. In this connection, it is significant that Joseph Hazzaya—to whom I shall return later—testifies to a difference between the Syriac version of Sergius and the Greek text of the Corpus available to him in the eighth century and certainly based on John of Scythopolis' recension.<sup>169</sup> This points to a different Greek *Vorlage* for the Syriac version; the original Greek may have been later corrected by John in his edition, which aimed at bringing the Corpus closer to the orthodoxy of his day.

*John of Caesarea and Severus of Antioch; Aeneas of Gaza*

The diffusion of the doctrine of apokatastasis in the Near East at the beginning of the sixth century is attested *e contrario* by Severus, bishop of Antioch (512–518), whose Letter 98 provides a refutation of this very doctrine.<sup>170</sup> Here, he rejects Origen's, Methodius's, and Gregory of Nyssa's assumption that physical death was providentially introduced by God in order either to put an end to one's sins or to reveal the finitude of evil, and in both cases to limit the amount and duration of suffering in the other world and finally have all rational creatures return to the Good. Severus claims that one's sins are not measured on the basis of their duration, but on the basis of the sinner's intention, which, in his view, is not limited, so that otherworldly punishment as well will have to be unlimited.

It is probable that Severus had in mind, not only a more general diffusion of the apokatastasis theory at that time, but also, more specifically, a precise opponent: John of Caesarea, the author of a series of anti-Manichaean syllogisms.<sup>171</sup> In *Syll.* 1,3,5,10 John countered the Manichaean claim that evil is a substance and has an ontological consistence of its own, opposed to that of God, by means of the thesis that evil has no ontological substance, but it comes from a wrong use of free will. Now, since all punishments will have the aim and the effect of transforming the evil persons, in the end nobody will choose evil any more, and as a consequence evil will no longer exist.

<sup>169</sup> Joseph sought to explain this discrepancy by hypothesising that the Syriac translator, being both "wise" and "wicked," altered the original Greek.

<sup>170</sup> On him P. Allen–R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch* (London, 2004); I. Torrance, *The Correspondence of Severus and Sergius* (Piscataway, 2011).

<sup>171</sup> *Iohannis Caesariensis presbyteri et grammatici opera quae supersunt*, ed. M. Richard, CCG 1 (Turnhout–Leuven, 1977), 131 ff.

It is notable that John supported the apokatastasis doctrine in the context of a polemic against Manichaeism, just as, I have argued, Augustine did.<sup>172</sup> For it is in his anti-Manichaean works that he took over both Origen's ontology and his eschatology. Indeed, the strong ontological/axiological monism of Origen's system (only God is the Good and the Being; evil is not) was the best weapon to contrast Manichaean dualism. This ontological/axiological monism, of course, was also the strongest metaphysical basis for the apokatastasis doctrine (if evil is not, it cannot possibly subsist eternally). It is not surprising that, before Augustine, Didymus of Alexandria too, a close follower of Origen and decided supporter of apokatastasis, availed himself of Origen's system against Manichaeism, and that an influence of Didymus's anti-Manichaean work is found precisely in John's syllogisms.<sup>173</sup>

More controversial is the presence of a doctrine of apokatastasis in Aeneas of Gaza (†520 CE ca), who declares himself a disciple of Hierocles the Neoplatonist, who taught in Alexandria some decades after the murder of Hypatia in 415 CE and was active around the middle of the fifth century. Aeneas' masterpiece is the dialogue *Theophrastus*, in which Gregory Nyssen's influence is strong, especially on the doctrine of the resurrection.<sup>174</sup> Like Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, Aeneas criticised metempsychosis and did not accept the so-called preexistence of souls, and in 43,12–19 insists on the depiction of the final unity and harmony of will. The purifying nature of all punishments seems to be implied in 50,24–51,9, in which Aeneas describes the “darkness of death” as a way to heal those who have fallen, and states that no soul will endure in rebellion and that the mortality of bodies will be cancelled. Even though Aeneas is not explicit, he does seem to have embraced the doctrine of apokatastasis.

### *The Exegesis of Revelation in the Sixth Century*

I have already shown<sup>175</sup> how the Book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse of John, was not necessarily at odds with the doctrine of apokatastasis, and how all depended on its interpretation. Origen's exegesis certainly reconciled it with the apokatastasis doctrine. Origen, however, albeit devoting

<sup>172</sup> See above in this same chapter, the section on Augustine.

<sup>173</sup> See Richard, *Iohannis Caesariensis*, lvi–lvii.

<sup>174</sup> See M. Wacht, *Aeneas von Gaza als Apologet. Seine Kosmologie im Verhältnis zum Platonismus* (Bonn, 1969).

<sup>175</sup> See above, Ch. 1.

several passages here and there to the interpretation of Revelation, does not seem to have composed a commentary on it. What is more, (almost)<sup>176</sup> no Greek Father wrote any for many centuries: the first known Greek commentary was written only in the sixth century, whereas in the West Victorinus of Pettau already in the third century offered a commentary, all based on a literal interpretation, and therefore packed with millenarian ideas, along a line that was diametrically opposed to that of Origen. In the fourth century, again in the West, there came Tyconius's commentary and Jerome's expurgated version of Victorinus's commentary.<sup>177</sup> But in the East, only at the end of the sixth century did a commentary on the Apocalypse appear: that by Oecumenius, who cites the Cappadocians and Eusebius as *auctoritates* and is influenced by Origen.<sup>178</sup> Like Origen (and unlike many of Origen's followers), he defends the authenticity of Revelation, provided that it is read allegorically and mystically, against any millenarian interpretation. Notably, in this way Oecumenius, just like Origen, can also explain away the violence that inflames many episodes of this book, and that, if taken literally, could by no means be worthy of God. This is why, for example, in discussing Rev 18:4–8, Oecumenius insists that God in fact punishes much less severely than the offence would merit, and to support his claim he has recourse to the authority of Gregory Nyssen and Evagrius, two strong supporters of the apokatastasis doctrine. However, he does not explicitly use Revelation in support of universal restoration, probably because of the so-called “condemnation of Origen” that had occurred meanwhile.

It must be mentioned that this reconstruction might have to undergo a slight change. Panayiotis Tzamalikos<sup>179</sup> suggests that the *Scholia in Apocalypsin* found in a Meteoron codex and ascribed to Origen by von Harnack were in fact compiled by Cassian the Sabaite in the sixth century on the basis of a lost commentary on Revelation by Didymus the Blind. Even in this case, the ideas would go back to Origen, on whose exegesis Didymus drew. But what would change would be the date of the first Greek

<sup>176</sup> See the very end of this section for the possible exception of Didymus.

<sup>177</sup> Jerome, heavily influenced by Origen at least until his sudden change of mind, in his own commentary on Isaiah wrote (using Origen's terminology) that “to interpret the Apocalypse according to the letter is ‘to Judaize.’” For Tyconius see at least the recent translation by R. Gryson, *Tyconius, Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, CCT 10 (Turnhout, 2011).

<sup>178</sup> M. de Groote, *Oecumenii commentarius in Apocalypsin* (Leuven, 1999); for Oecumenius's use of the Origenian tradition in reference to otherworldly punishment see already F. Diekamp, “Mitteilungen über den neugefundenen Kommentar des Oecumenius zur Apokalypse,” *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 42 (1901) 7–8.

<sup>179</sup> *The Real Cassian and An Ancient Commentary*.



commentary on Revelation: if Tzamalikos's hypothesis is right, the first commentator in the Greek world would be, not Oecumenius, but Didymus, two centuries earlier. This would mean that Didymus had no problems with accepting the inspiration of Revelation, provided that this book was interpreted allegorically. Thus, Didymus entertained the same view as Origen, of whom indeed he was a close follower. In this case, Oecumenius would have had Didymus's commentary at his disposal, and that was replete with Origen's ideas.

Andrew of Caesarea of Cappadocia between the late sixth and the early seventh century will also write a Commentary on Revelation<sup>180</sup> which is deeply indebted to Oecumenius, in spite of never citing his name. The three-fold model of Scriptural exegesis (literal, moral and spiritual, corresponding to human body, soul and spirit) clearly derives from Origen, but Andrew wrote when concerns over Origenism were strong, soon after Justinian, and when the name of Origen was arbitrarily associated to a number of extravagant doctrines.

*Justinian and Origenism.  
Was Origen Ever "Condemned by the Church"?*

The so-called "condemnation of Origen" by "the Church" in the sixth century probably never occurred proper, and even if it occurred it did so only as a result of a long series of misunderstandings, when the anthropological, eschatological, and psychological questions were no longer felt as open to investigation—as Origen and still Nazianzen considered them<sup>181</sup>—, but dogmatically established. The aforementioned condemnation was in fact a condemnation, not at all of Origen, but rather of a late and exasperated form of Origenism; moreover, it was mainly wanted by emperor Justinian—or better his counsellors, given that he was not a theologian<sup>182</sup>—and only partially, or even not at all, ratified by ecclesiastical representatives.

This "condemnation" was triggered by the development of a radical kind of Origenism in the first half of the sixth century, especially in Palestine,

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<sup>180</sup> J. Schmid, *Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse-Texten*, 1: *Der Apokalypse-Kommentar des Andrea von Kaisarea* (München, 1955). First English translation by E.S. Constantinou, *Andrew of Caesarea, Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Washington, 2011).

<sup>181</sup> See above, ch. 3, section on Nazianzen.

<sup>182</sup> That he was more of an administrator than of a theologian and cared more for the unity of the church and the empire than for theological doctrines is rightly stressed by V. Menze, *Justinian and the Making of the Syrian Orthodox Church* (Oxford, 2008).

in the monasteries of St. Saba, the “Great Laura” and “New Laura” (from the latter came Theodore Askidas, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and Domitian of Ancyra). This may have been facilitated by the preservation of Evagrius’s writings there.<sup>183</sup> The above-mentioned *Book of Hierotheus*, which did not fail to alarm for its pantheism, seems to be an expression of this sort of intellectual environment. Cyril of Scythopolis in *Vita Cyriaci* 12 is a good source concerning this radicalised form of Origenism, even though Cyriacus, who is speaking there, indicates as the sources of the contemporary Origenists’ doctrines “Pythagoras, Plato, Origen, Evagrius, and Didymus.” The diffusion of the apokatastasis theory specifically in Palestine is also testified to by the correspondence of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, a collection of letters in which the two ascetics of the Gaza desert reply to a long series of questions.<sup>184</sup> The most relevant to the present investigation are Letters 600 to 606. In Letter 600, a monk asks Barsanuphius what his position is about Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius’s *Kephalaia Gnostica*, especially about the doctrines of the preexistence of souls and apokatastasis. Barsanuphius and John, in their replies, are completely against these theories (600; 601).<sup>185</sup> Likewise, in Letter 607 the question is whether the bodies of the resurrection will be “with bones and nerves,” or “aerial and spherical” (the latter being Origen’s supposed doctrine). All these are the same doctrines that Justinian wanted to definitely extirpate from Christianity, just as

<sup>183</sup> So Bunge, approved by Clark, *Controversy*, 256. On the Origenism of the Laura monks, attested by the biography of St. Saba, see F. Diekamp, *Die origenistischen Streitigkeiten* (Münster, 1899). On sixth-century Origenism see at least B. Daley, “What Did ‘Origenism’ Mean in the Sixth Century?,” in *Origeniana VI* (Leuven, 1995), 627–638. On the persecution of “heretics” under Justinian see *Heretics and Heresies in the Ancient Church and in Eastern Christianity. Festschrift Adelbert Davids*, eds. J. Verheyden–H.G.B. Teule (Leuven, 2011), esp. Ch. 9 by D. Müller.

<sup>184</sup> The first complete English translation is by J. Chrysavgis, *Barsanuphius and John: Letters* (2 vols.; Washington, 2006; 2010). See also J.L. Hevelone-Harper, “Ecclesiastics and Ascetics: Finding Spiritual Authority in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Palestine,” *Hugoye* 9,1 (2006) §§1–28; Eadem, *Disciples of the Desert* (Baltimore–London, 2005). Now on the ascetic life of the Gaza desert from the fourth to the seventh century see B. Ashkelony–A. Kofsky, *The Monastic School of Gaza* (Leiden, 2006), based on the epistolary correspondence stemming from these monks. This book seeks to frame the historical development of this community and endeavours to analyse the spiritual and intellectual context of what may be termed the monastic school of Gaza. See also L. Perrone, “Monasticism of Gaza. A Chapter in the History of Byzantine Palestine,” in *Zwischen Polis, Provinz, und Peripherie*, ed. L.M. Hoffmann (Wiesbaden, 2005), 59–74; R.M. Parrinello, “La scuola monastica di Gaza,” *Rivista di storia del Cristianesimo* 5 (2008) 545–565.

<sup>185</sup> John’s reply in particular with respect to Evagrius is at the roots of this thinker’s dichotomic fortune: his ascetic works were respected and used as guides, whereas his speculative works such as *Kephalaia Gnostica* were considered to be dangerous.

he wanted to close the Platonic school of Athens. Greek philosophy inspired the Origenistic heresy in his view and in that of many other protagonists of the Origenistic controversy. This, indeed, was an old cliché of heresiology.

Justinian received reports about the Origenistic doctrines and promoted a condemnation of this kind of Origenism, which he mistook for Origen's own doctrine, at first in 543 CE.<sup>186</sup> His long letter to Men(n)as,<sup>187</sup> the patriarch of Constantinople—written, as Justinian declares right at the beginning, out of his own solicitude for the Church—is replete with rebuttals of doctrines that the emperor attributes to Origen himself (even in the title, the letter is “against the impious Origen and his unholy doctrines”), but were certainly *not* Origen's, such as the preexistence of bare souls or the sphericity of the risen body. The only doctrine really maintained by Origen that Justinian mentions is precisely that of apokatastasis and the end of infernal punishments (and even here, as I shall show, Justinian is not free from misunderstandings). The doctrinal contents of this letter, of course, did not come from Justinian's own theological competence or personal investigation, but from the zeal of his ecclesiastical counsellors, namely some anti-Origenistic monks of the Laura of St. Sabas led by abbot Gelasius. These, probably also on the basis of a heavily interpolated version of Origen's *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, composed a document, which they gave to Peter of Jerusalem, who transmitted it to Justinian. Cyril of Scythopolis attests that from this document Justinian derived his edict so-called “against Origen.” He also attests that already Sabas himself in 531 urged Justinian to eradicate the heresies of Origen, Arius, and Nestorius, and that Gelasius in a speech to his monks in 546 stated that Sabas detested both Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia (*V. Sab.* 72; 87).<sup>188</sup> Note that these two theologians shared the doctrine of apokatastasis. Indeed, it was Gelasius who had Antipater of Bostra's treatise *Against Origen's Ideas* read at the Great Laura. That Antipater's ungrounded accusations against Origen (they rather addressed later, radicalised forms of Origenism) soon passed on to Justinian's decrees is clear from an analysis of these very accusations and a comparison with those adduced by Justinian against Origen. Fragments from Antipater's treatise *Κατὰ Ὁριγένους* are mostly preserved by John of Damascus—in his way a knower of Origen and an opponent of

<sup>186</sup> D. Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy* (Rome, 2001).

<sup>187</sup> I shall quote and translate from M. Amelotti–L.M. Zingale, eds., *Scritti teologici ed ecclesiastici di Giustiniano* (Milan, 1977), 68–118, of which I also follow the pagination.

<sup>188</sup> E. Schwartz, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis* (Leipzig, 1939).

Manichaeism<sup>189</sup>—in his *Sacra Parallela* (CPG III 6687). From here one can gather that Antipater accused Origen of holding the preexistence of bare souls and their imprisonment in bodies as a punishment for their fall, and the sphericity of the risen body, all reproaches that one finds again in Justinian.

In his letter Justinian initially declares that the occasion for this document was his learning that some people, “having abandoned the divine Scriptures and the holy Fathers [...], claim their rights on Origen and his Greek, Arian, and Manichaean doctrines.” In Justinian’s rhetoric, Origen is opposed to Scripture—notwithstanding his being the greatest exegete of the Church—and to Patristic authorities as well, among whom he is clearly not included. What is more, he is assimilated not only to pagan philosophers, but even to Arians and Manichaeans, to whose subordinationism and dualism, respectively, Origen’s thought was diametrically contrary.<sup>190</sup> In order to demonstrate that Origen’s thought was in fact “Arian” (of course *ante litteram*), Justinian proceeds to quote or paraphrase some Trinitarian statements of Origen’s, such as that “the Father is greater than the Son,” which is in fact a Johannine statement (John 14:18), and that “the Son and the Holy Spirit are κτίσματα,” which Justinian interprets as “creatures,” but which is again a biblical statement, grounded on the *epinoia* of Christ as Wisdom and the biblical description of Wisdom as κτίσμα, which God ἔκτισε at the beginning (Prov 8:23–31; Sir 1). Justinian quotes from Book 1 of *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* a passage in which Origen is supposed to state that God’s power is limited. Origen in fact was, along with Philo, Gregory of Nyssa’s inspirer in respect to the notion of God’s infinity.<sup>191</sup> Next, Origen’s notion of the existence of the Ideas of all realities in the Logos-Wisdom of God, who is Christ, is presented by Justinian as the heretical doctrine of the coeternity of genera and species with God (πάντα τὰ γένη καὶ τὰ εἶδη συναΐδια ἔστι τῷ θεῷ). While Origen was

<sup>189</sup> See F. Gahbauer, “Origenes in den Schriften des Johannes von Damaskus,” in *Origeniana VII*, 711–716; G. Arabatzis, “*Gumnê kephalê*. Jean Damascène et le *Phèdre* de Platon,” in *La transcendance dans la philosophie grecque tardive et dans la pensée chrétienne. Actes du VIe congrès de philosophie grecque. Athènes 22–27 septembre 2004*, eds. E. Moutsopoulos–G. Lekkas (Paris, 2006), 60–271 and *Diotima* 35 (2007) 117–128; D. Kapantaïs, “Libre arbitre et création du monde dans le traité *Contre les manichéens* de Jean de Damas,” *Diotima* 35 (2007) 129–138.

<sup>190</sup> See Ramelli, “Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism.”

<sup>191</sup> See A.C. Geljon, “Divine Infinity in Gregory of Nyssa and Philo of Alexandria,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 59 (2005), 152–177; E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Göttingen, 1966). In my *Gregorio di Nissa* I have endeavoured to indicate remarkable antecedents in Origen. See above, Ch. 3, n. 457.

clear that some of these Ideas became substances when they were created as *logika*, so that not even the *logika* are coeternal with God (indeed, only the Son and the Spirit are coeternal with the Father according to Origen<sup>192</sup>), Justinian thought that Origen taught the coeternity of all souls with God and their incarnation only at a certain point, after their fall, and, worse still, their reincarnations ("those among the *logika* who had committed sin and for this reason fell from the condition in which they were, according to the gravity of their sins became incarnated in bodies for punishment; they are purified and return to the condition in which they were beforehand; they take off their bodies completely, and then again, for the second and the third time, and for many more times, they are incarnated again in different bodies for the sake of punishment"). But such a doctrine was overtly and repeatedly rejected by Origen as impious. He never taught metempsychosis.<sup>193</sup> In the same way, Justinian misunderstands Origen's doctrine of subsequent aeons (αἰῶνες) into a doctrine of different worlds (κόσμοι): "He also supposed that different worlds were constituted and are continually constituted, in the past and in the future" (70).

After a vigorous invective against the supposed impiety of Origen, Justinian, who was so hostile to Greek philosophy and paganism, interestingly levels against Origen the very same accusation as *Porphry* had adduced, from the *pagan* and *Greek philosophical* side: that of applying to Scripture the exegetical strategy of Greek allegoresis,<sup>194</sup> which was in fact used by Greek philosophers (Stoics and Neoplatonists) in the interpretation of pagan myths. The presupposition at work in both cases is that of the incompatibility of philosophy and Christianity, against which already Origen had to defend himself during his life.<sup>195</sup> This is why Justinian goes on to accuse Origen, Arius, and the Manichaeans of deriving their "heresies" from Plato, in particular concerning the Trinitarian doctrine and the punishment of human souls in bodies.<sup>196</sup> Justinian proceeds to a refutation of the last

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism."

<sup>193</sup> See my "Origen, Patristic Philosophy," and *Gregorio di Nissa Sull'Anima*.

<sup>194</sup> "Nourished with Greek mythological discourses, and wishing to extend them (into Christianity), he excogitated to interpret the divine Scripture on that basis, that in this way he could mix his hideous doctrines to Holy Scriptures and maliciously introduce his Greek, Manichaean, and Arian deception and folly and thus mislead those who are not expert in the divine Scripture."

<sup>195</sup> Cf. my "Origen, Patristic Philosophy."

<sup>196</sup> "For, what did Origen add to what was already said by Plato, who spread the Greek foolishness? Or from whom else did Arius take his own illness and wrote it down, he who theorised different degrees in the holy and *homoousios* Trinity, for the perdition of his own

thesis, which was not Origen's—who did not assume that the *logika* received a body only after their fall—, but he believed it was. Justinian argues that, if souls received a body because of their sin and for the sake of their expiation, they should no longer sin after their incarnation, and their bodies should not cooperate with them in sin. His conclusion is that the body was not created afterwards as a punishment for the soul, but bodies and souls were created together. He states the anthropological conception that “the human being is neither a body without a soul nor a soul without a body” (74), and he cites Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzen) to the effect that the human soul comes from God but is not a divine substance itself; rather, it received reason, intellect, and immortality from God by grace. Justinian goes on to insist that “the soul neither preexists nor gets embodied because of its sin” (84), a statement that Origen himself would have entirely endorsed.

Another doctrine of Origen that is criticised by Justinian, who reports it in an imprecise way, is that of the preexistence of the soul of the Lord and the union of God the Logos with it, before its incarnation in the Virgin (86). Justinian also cites Nyssen's refutation of the preexistence of souls, in the conviction that it was directed against Origen, which is in fact far from being certain and in fact, as I have thoroughly argued elsewhere,<sup>197</sup> is very improbable. What is evident is that Justinian closely related the so-called pre-existence of souls to metempsychosis (88–90); “the cause of this absurdity [sc. metempsychosis] is the following: to believe that the souls preexisted.” At 92, Justinian insists that the right doctrine of the Fathers “forbids to say that souls exist prior to bodies” (93; cf. 96); he criticises the martyr Pamphilus himself, albeit without mentioning him by name—and certainly without having read his *Apology*—for calling Origen *magister Ecclesiae*: “Some have even dared to declare that Origen was ‘a teacher of the Church!’” (92).

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soul? And in what does Origen differ from Manichaeism, he who affirms that the *souls of human beings got incarnated in bodies because of their sins, for the sake of punishment*? According to him, first they were *noes* and holy powers, then, filled with satiety of the divine contemplation, they turned to the worse and for this reason they cooled off [*ἀποψυχίσας*], far from the love of God, and therefore were called souls [*ψυχαί*] and became incarnated in bodies for the sake of punishment.” See also later, in 92: “those who think like Origen follow the Greek and Arian foolishness.” Toward the end, at 104–106, Justinian invites Menas and the other bishops and abbots to anathematise, along with Origen, a series of other heretics: Sabellius, Arius, Apollinarius, Nestorius, Eutyches, Dioscorus, and others, ending with “Origen, who got ill with the folly of the Greeks and the Arians, together with his odious and impious doctrines.”

<sup>197</sup> In *Preexistence of Souls*?

Another charge against Origen reported and appropriated by Justinian (92) is that he denied the resurrection of the body, a charge which is unfounded. Justinian has again Origen's purported denial of the resurrection depend on his alleged belief in the preexistence of "bare souls." Moreover, after stating that Origen denied the resurrection, in 98 he inconsistently maintains that he in fact admitted of the resurrection of bodies, but thought that "in the resurrection human bodies will rise spherical," and even that "the body of the [risen] Lord was spherical." The sphericity of risen bodies seems to have been in fact supported by some Origenists in the time of Justinian—as is attested in the correspondence of Barsanuphius and John in the first half of the sixth century<sup>198</sup> and in Cyril of Scythopolis *V. Cyr.* 12—but certainly not by Origen, who may have been misunderstood when he spoke of the perfection of heavenly bodies as including sphericity (*De or.* 31,3). In 96 Justinian quotes from Basil, *In Hex.* 3, an exegesis of the Genesis "upper waters" that was different from that of Origen, who saw in them a symbol of spiritual powers. Basil, however, does not mention Origen, but Justinian even wants to infer from his words, *πρὸς τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡμῶν ἐστὶ τις λόγος*, that he was criticising Origen and wanted to present him as one rejected by the church (because he said *ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας* and not "in the church" or "belonging to the church"). Justinian even goes so far as to attribute apostasy to Origen (98),<sup>199</sup> a charge that was already present in Nemesius.<sup>200</sup>

In 100 the emperor focuses on the theme that is the most direct concern of the present investigation: apokatastasis. It is remarkable that still Justinian *only* criticises that of demons and impious humans: "the *punishment of all impious human beings and of demons* has an end [*πέρας ἔχει*], and the *impious and the demons will be restored* [*ἀποκατασταθήσονται ἁσεβεῖς τε καὶ δαίμονες*] to their original status." Justinian's motivation is pedagogical and "pastoral" (indeed, he tends to assume the role of the bishops, and even dictates them word for word what they will have to write in the Acts of their council!<sup>201</sup>): those who preach the doctrine of apokatastasis "make

<sup>198</sup> In Letter 607 Barsanuphius, as I have mentioned, refutes the contemporary Origenistic doctrine of a resurrection of ethereal and spherical bodies. Critical ed. by F. Neyt–P. De Angelis, *Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza. Correspondance* (Paris, 2001).

<sup>199</sup> "When the time came to give testimony to his faith, he denied Christ and adored the deities of Greek polytheism, which he introduced (into Christianity)."

<sup>200</sup> See P.F. Beatrice, "Origen in Nemesius' Treatise *On the Nature of Man*," in *Origeniana IX*, eds. G. Heidl–R. Somos (Leuven, 2009), 505–532.

<sup>201</sup> At 104, after expounding Origen's purported theories, he orders Menas to summon all the bishops and abbots of Constantinople, and to have them "anathematise by all means,

people *lazy* in fulfilling God's commandments." This was in fact Origen's own concern, and this is why he did not really preach that doctrine too overtly.

Against the doctrine of apokatastasis Justinian adduces the same argument I have highlighted in Basil (or Ps. Basil), in a work addressed to his monks: the Gospel says that the impious will go to "eternal punishment," the just to "eternal life"; thus, "both the punishment and the Kingdom are said by the Gospel to be interminable [ἀτελεύτητος]," so that, if one affirms that the punishment will cease, one should also admit that the life of the blessed will cease, because "*both* are declared to be αἰώνιος." What neither Justinian nor "Basil" take into consideration is that in the phrases κόλασις αἰώνιος and ζωὴ αἰώνιος the adjective does not mean "eternal," but "of the world to come." That this argument was quite fashionable at that time is proved by its occurrence also in Barsanuphius of Gaza's Letter 607, chronologically very close to Justinian's writing: both punishment and beatitude must be eternal in the very same way. Another objection concerns justice: it is absurd that "in the apokatastasis demons and impious people will receive the same rank as saints." What is not considered is that this, in Origen's view, will not happen before the fulfilment of God's justice and the complete purification of all sinners.

Justinian then collects what he deems to be evidence against apokatastasis from Nazianzen, Basil, John of Constantinople, and St. Paul. From "Basil" he quotes the aforementioned passage in *Asceticum Magnum*, which parallels eternal life and eternal death and is based on the misunderstanding of the meaning of αἰώνιος. From Nazianzen he quotes that the soul, being ἀθάνατος, will be either punished or rewarded ἀθάνατα. I have already discussed this passage, too, along passages that suggest that Nazianzen embraced the doctrine of apokatastasis, and have observed that here, just as in Evagrius, ἀθάνατος seems to have a qualitative, rather than a quantitative, meaning. Justinian also cites a passage in which Nazianzen characterises the last judgment as "stable, ultimate, terrible, and just," and says that there is no appeal to any other court after it. But Origen's notion of apokatastasis is not opposite to it, in that it does not deny God's justice. From John of Constantinople

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in writing," the doctrines of "the impious Origen also called Adamantius, an enemy of God, who was a presbyter of the most holy church in Alexandria, and his horrible and impious doctrines, and all the points listed below." At 106 he remarks that he has written this letter not only to Menas, but also to Vigilius of Rome and to the patriarchs of Alexandria and Jerusalem, because "the writings of Origen are completely extraneous to the true Christian faith." A list of anathemas concludes the document: prepared by the emperor, it was to be signed by the bishops.



Justinian finally cites a clear passage against apokatastasis: “the man who is delivered to the fire cannot expect an end of his punishment.” Paul’s sentence, instead, which is taken by Justinian to assert the eternity of other-worldly punishments, in fact does not imply this, since in οἱ ἁμαρτάνοντες δίκην τίσουσιν ὀλεθρον αἰώνιον, the last adjective, again, is far from meaning “eternal.” Thus, there is in fact no question of an “eternal perdition” or “eternal death.”

At 106–116 Justinian collects a series of Greek quotations from Origen, all from his *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*, or better from the lore of bits that had been used for centuries in the Origenist controversy, always cut at the very same points, modified, extrapolated from their context, and at best misunderstood, when not utterly falsified. Justinian had never read the whole masterpiece of Origen, let alone anything else of his commentaries or other works. The first quote is from Book 1: the Son is inferior to the Father because he reaches, not all beings, but only rational creatures, and the Spirit is still inferior as it reaches only saints. Origen, however, was not making a classification nor was he subordinating the Son and the Spirit to the Father. He rather pointed to their specific operations. The Son for him is the creator of all, not only of the *logika*. Then Justinian quotes from Book 2: the power of God—Origen maintains according to him—is limited. Origen was rather inclined to posit the infinitude of God, not to mention divine omnipotence, and he was followed by Gregory Nyssen. From Book 4, Justinian cites that the Son is a *κτίσμα*, and therefore created (*γενητόν*). This is not what Origen meant with *κτίσμα*, but, as I have argued, he simply used biblical vocabulary applied to the Wisdom of God, which God *ἔκτισε* before all times. Again, that “the Father is greater than the Son” is Johannine, not Origen’s. The Father is the Good per se (*αὐτοαγαθόν*), the Son is the image of God’s goodness: now, the Father or First God as *αὐτοαγαθόν* is Middle-Platonic lore, as I have demonstrated elsewhere,<sup>202</sup> and the Son’s being the Father’s image is biblical, from Hebrews.<sup>203</sup>

Justinian next criticises Origen’s exegesis of the two Cherubs of Isaiah and the two living Beings of Habakkuk as the Son and the Spirit; this, however, is in an exegetical context and is not to be taken in a subordinationistic sense; these are images. From Book 2, Justinian next purportedly cites: “the Lord is a mere human being,” which is “Arian,” not Origen’s. From Book 1, “creatures are coeternal with God,” is a misunderstanding of the eternal existence of Ideas of all things in God’s Logos. Justinian then passes on to

<sup>202</sup> “Origen, Patristic Philosophy,” 217–263.

<sup>203</sup> See my “Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of *Hypostasis*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 105 (2012) 302–350.

the fall of the *noes* and endeavours to present Origen's doctrine as a kind of metempsychosis that goes so far as to include the assumption of animal (even fishes') bodies on the part of human souls. But Origen, as I have said, was adamant in his rejection of any form of metempsychosis. Justinian does not pay attention to the metaphorical value of Origen's statements: ἵν' οὕτως εἴπω. Depraved humans become *like* animals. Also, "that there will be a complete deposition of bodies" is a hypothesis that does not deny the resurrection and that Origen never decided to endorse. The transformation of souls into *noes* is also criticised, just as the idea that what is lost (τὸ ἀπολωλός), once recovered and saved, is no longer lost, which is an idea, not of Origen alone, but of the Gospel, especially in Luke's parables of the lost sheep, the lost drachma, and the prodigal son. That the heavenly bodies are endowed with a soul and are living is also blamed, but was a widespread theory in pagan and Christian antiquity. Also, that Jesus will be crucified again and again in the future eons is in fact contradictory with several other authentic statements of Origen's on the unicity and the eternal and universal validity of Christ's sacrifice.<sup>204</sup>

Thus, on the basis of such deformations, misattributions, and misunderstandings (also due to Justinian's incapacity of taking allegories as such and not as descriptions), at the end of his letter to Menas, the emperor lists the anathemas that had to be subscribed by bishops and abbots and that, to his mind, represented "Origen's blasphemies": the preexistence of bare human souls and their union with bodies after the fall for the sake of punishment; the preexistence of the Lord's soul and its union with God the Logos after the formation of the body of Jesus in Mary;<sup>205</sup> the assimilation of the Logos of God to the heavenly hosts; the resurrection of human bodies in a spherical shape; the rational nature of heaven, of heavenly bodies, and of "upper waters"; the crucifixion of Christ in the future aeon for the demons; the limitation of the power of God; the coeternity of creatures with God; the limited duration of the punishment of demons and impious human beings and their restoration.

In 543 CE the provincial synod, summoned at court, condemned the doctrines indicated by the emperor. In the acts (DS 2301) the apokatastasis of

<sup>204</sup> See my "The Universal and Eternal Validity of Jesus's High-Priestly Sacrifice. The Epistle to the Hebrews in Support of Origen's Theory of Apokatastasis," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts*, eds. R.J. Bauckham–D.R. Driver–T.A. Hart–N. MacDonald (London, 2008), 210–221.

<sup>205</sup> Note the contradiction with what Justinian had stated earlier in his letter, that according to Origen this union happened *before* the Virgin's conception.

demons as impious people is censured in the form indicated by Justinian: "If anyone claims or maintains that the punishment of demons and of impious people is temporary, and that it will cease sooner or later, or that the complete restoration of demons and impious humans will take place, be it anathema."<sup>206</sup> The cessation of otherworldly punishments for the worst creatures, demons and impious men—not generally sinners—is the unacceptable point; I have already noticed that this point emerged at least with Epiphanius, and, regarding the devil, already during Origen's life.

Justinian's *Epistula ad synodum de Origene*, although it repeatedly mentions Origen's name, in fact includes nothing of Origen's true thought among the doctrines it blames. Justinian declares his intention to preserve the Church from "Origen and those who think like him." It is telling that Justinian affirms to be worried about "monks in Jerusalem who follow, and teach, Pythagoras, Plato, Origen also called Adamantius, and their impious and erroneous doctrines." Justinian felt he had to intervene and make a closer investigation, to avoid that "they might lead many people to perdition with their Greek and Manichaean deceit [Ἑλληνικῆς καὶ Μανιχαϊκῆς ἀπάτης]." Origen's doctrine may still have points of contact with Plato, and some with Pythagoreanism—although by no means any that were incompatible with Christianity, such as metempsychosis or the "eternal return"—, but it is certainly the opposite of Manichaean dualism. Justinian's statements are impossible to refer to Origen's thought, which they misrepresent so heavily.

Accusations of being more of a philosopher than of a Christian were levelled against Origen already during his life, and he endeavoured to refute them,<sup>207</sup> but they continued nevertheless, and Justinian's opinion is but an (eloquent) example, in his above-mentioned conviction that Greek philosophy and Christianity were incompatible. Later in this short letter, indeed, Justinian connects again the doctrines he ascribes to Origen with Pythagoras, Plato, and Plotinus. The rationale for this seems to be their adhesion to the theory of metempsychosis, which Origen, however, not only did not accept, but rejected explicitly, as I have said. Moreover, Justinian endeavours to present Plato as a supporter of the doctrine of apokatastasis, in the form of the restoration of each soul to its original condition after a thousand years. In fact, Plato did *not* support a doctrine of universal apokatastasis and thought

<sup>206</sup> See H. Crouzel, "Les condamnations subies par Origène et sa doctrine," in *Origeniana VII*, 311–318; Gasparro, *Origene e la tradizione*, 97–106 on the quotations from Origen's masterpiece in the letter to Menas.

<sup>207</sup> See Ramelli, "Origen, Patristic Philosophy," 217–263.

that some souls will remain forever in Tartarus in that they are “incurable,” a point on which Origen expressly corrected his thought by declaring that “no being is ‘incurable’ for the One who created it.”<sup>208</sup> But Justinian’s intention was to present Origen’s supposed doctrines as dependent on pagan philosophy and therefore unacceptable.<sup>209</sup> Thus, at the end of the letter he exhorts the prelates to “condemn and anathematise” these doctrines “together with the impious Origen and all those who share, or will share, such ideas, until the end.”

In fact, the doctrine he describes in his letter, concerning the initial and final monad/henad, is post-Evagrian, and precisely that of the “Isochristoi” (a term that comes from Cyril of Scythopolis *Vit. Cyr.* 12–13): “they say that the *noes* were without any number or name, so that there was a Henad of all *logika* in which these all shared the same substance [οὐσία], operation [ἐνέργεια], and power [δύναμις], and the same union [ἐνωσις] with God the Logos and the same knowledge [γνώσις]. And when they had satiety [κόρος], so to say, of the love and the contemplation of God, according to each one’s change into the worse, they put on bodies, finer or denser [λεπτομερέστερα ἢ παχυμερέστερα σώματα ἀμφιάσασθαι], and received names, and from these the heavenly and serving powers had their origin. But also the sun, the moon, and the stars were part of the same Henad of *logika*, and due to a movement toward the worse have become what they are now. But the *logika* that have become colder [ἀποψυχέντα] and have detached more from the love of God were called ‘souls’ [ψυχάς] and had to take up denser bodies—ours—, whereas those who reached the culmination of evil were imprisoned in cold and dark bodies [ψυχροῖς

<sup>208</sup> See my “The Philosophical Stance.” Macrobius, like Justinian, claimed that Plato believed in universal restoration, but Macrobius did so in that he believed in it himself and wanted to adduce Plato as a venerable *auctoritas*. See my “The Debate on Apokatastasis in Pagan and Christian Platonists,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 33–34 (2008–2009) 201–234.

<sup>209</sup> 124: “Pythagoras claimed that the Monad is the principle of all [ἀρχὴν τῶν πάντων {...} τὴν μονάδα]; Pythagoras and Plato claimed that the body is a prison for incorporeal souls; these are sent into bodies for punishment, after their fall into some sin, so that Plato called the body ‘prison’ and ‘tomb.’ Here Justinian expands on the “restoration” of souls after a thousand years according to Plato, and adds: “Who taught him the periods of years and the thousand years? And that after a thousand years each soul returns to its original place? [...] Pythagoras, Plato, and Plotinus, and those who adhered to their madness, agreed that souls are immortal and existed before bodies.” Justinian goes on to describe metempsychosis including migrations of souls from humans to animals. It is revealing that Justinian immediately after adds that these were *Origen’s* doctrines: “But the church [...] affirms that the soul was created along with the body, and not first, and the body after, *according to Origen’s folly*,” κατὰ τὴν ὀριγένους φρενοβλάβειαν.

καὶ ζοφεροῖς σώμασι], and became, and were called, demons.” The famous ψυχή-ψῦξις etymological explanation comes from Origen, but in Origen’s view the *logika* are creatures, not coeternal with God the Logos, and did not receive a body for the first time only after their fall and as a result of it.

The apokatastasis of the devil and of impious human beings is included again by Justinian among dangerous doctrines: “all will return again to the same Henad and will become *noes*, just as they were in their preexistence [ἐν τῇ προϋπάρξει], when clearly even the devil will be restored [ἀποκαθιστάμενου] into the same Henad, and the other demons, and the impious and atheistic human beings.” Even now, the apokatastasis of mere human sinners does not seem to be contested.

Although he does mention Origen in this letter, however, the very philosophical doctrines that Justinian expounds here have little to do with Origen. One of these is, for example, the doctrine of the destruction of the body: “There will be a complete destruction of bodies [παντελὴς ἔσται τῶν σωμάτων ἀνείρεσις]: the Lord himself is the first to put off his own body, and all the others will do so.” Origen supported the resurrection of bodies and even in Περὶ ἀρχῶν was very doubtful regarding their final passage to immateriality, convinced as he was that only the Holy Trinity can live without a body (indeed, a final passage to immateriality by grace in his perspective might have been justified only by θέωσις). The doctrine reported by Justinian that there will be a confusion of substances between all rational creatures and Christ-Logos (“there will be no difference in the least between Christ and the other *logika* either in substance or in knowledge or in power or in operation”) is even less of Origen’s thought; it is rather typical of sixth-century “Isochristoi,” who radicalised Evagrian ideas.

The Council that is usually cited as that which “condemned Origen” is the fifth ecumenical council, the second Constantinopolitan Council, in 553 CE. First of all, its ecumenicity is in fact doubtful, since it was wanted by Justinian and not by Vigilius, the bishop of Rome, or other bishops; Vigilius was even brought to Constantinople by force, by the emperor’s order, and moreover he did not accept to declare that the council was open (Justinian had to do so). The anathemas, fifteen in number, were already prepared before the opening of the council. Here, Origen is considered to be the inspirer of the so-called Isochristoi. This was the position of the Sabaite opponents of Origen, summarised by Cyril of Scythopolis who maintained that the Council issued a definitive anathema against Origen, Theodore, Evagrius, and Didymus concerning the preexistence of souls and apokatastasis, thus ratifying Sabas’ position (V. *Sab.* 90). One of these previously formulated anathemas, which only waited to be ratified by the Council, was against the apokatas-

tasis doctrine: "If anyone supports the monstrous doctrine of apokatastasis [τὴν τερατῶδη ἀποκατάστασιν], be it anathema." Other anathemas concern the "pre-existence of souls," their union with bodies only after their fall, and the denial of the resurrection of the body. These doctrines have nothing to do with Origen; in fact, Origen is not the object of any authentic anathema.<sup>210</sup> And Vigilius's documents, which were finally emanated by a council that was not wanted by him, most remarkably do not even contain Origen's name. Origen was never formally condemned by any Christian ecumenical council. Prestige once observed, inspiredly, that "Origen is the greatest of that happily small company of saints who, having lived and died in grace, suffered sentence of expulsion from the Church on earth after they had already entered into the joy of their Lord."<sup>211</sup> We may add that Origen, strictly speaking, did not even suffer any formal expulsion from the church. One problem is that later Christian authors considered the aforementioned anathemas as referring to Origen; so, extraneous theories were ascribed to him. The condemnations were also ascribed to Didymus and Evagrius; indeed, the Isochristoi professed a radical form of Evagrianism and some anathemas seem to reflect some of Evagrius's *Kephalaia Gnostica*, but it would be inaccurate to refer all of Justinian's accusations and of the Council's "condemnations" to Evagrius.

What is notable, these condemnations, however, were never connected with Nyssen, not even that concerning universal apokatastasis. There may be various explanations to this. One is that Nyssen, the theologian who inspired the Constantinople theology in 381 CE, enjoyed too high an authority to be criticised.<sup>212</sup> Also, his ideas could by then be related—and indeed were related—to the Purgatory theory. And his manuscripts bristle with interpolations and glosses concerned with explaining that Gregory in fact

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<sup>210</sup> Only Anathema 11 in the official acts mentions Origen, in the last position, and notably out of chronological order, in a list of heretics: "Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches, and Origen." In its sketch in Justinian's *Homonoia* that list does not include the name of Origen. This strongly points to an interpolation. Indeed, several anathemas, including those which mention Origen, did not belong to the official Acts of the Council, but were interpolated later. Norman Tanner is right to exclude them from his edition of the Acts of the Councils, noting that they "cannot be attributed to this council" (*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* [London, 1990], 106). That Origen in fact was never officially condemned by the Church is argued by H. Crouzel, "Les condamnations subies par Origène et sa doctrine," in *Origeniana VII*, 311–315.

<sup>211</sup> G.L. Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics: Six Studies in Dogmatic Faith with Prologue and Epilogue* (London, 1968), 43.

<sup>212</sup> So Daley, *Hope*, 190.

did not support the theory of apokatastasis.<sup>213</sup> Germanus of Constantinople, in the eighth century, even claimed that Gregory's works were interpolated by heretics who ascribed Origen's ideas to Gregory.<sup>214</sup>

But precisely from the time of Justinian an important confirmation of the presence of this doctrine in Gregory's and the other Cappadocians' writings is given in Barsanuphius's Letter 604. A monk has asked him how it is that Origen's doctrine, especially that of apokatastasis, was supported by orthodox authors, and even saints, such as the Cappadocians. Barsanuphius, far from trying to deny that the Cappadocians supported the doctrine of apokatastasis, simply observes that even saints can have a limited understanding of the mysteries of God and can be wrong. Therefore, neither the monk nor Barsanuphius, who heartily detested the doctrine of apokatastasis, thought that Gregory did not actually believe in apokatastasis and that his works were interpolated by heretics in order to have people think so.

*Maximus the Confessor: Apokatastasis as a Mystery*

ἀνάστασις ἐστὶν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τῆς φύσεως  
ἡμῶν ἀποκατάστασις.

The resurrection is the restoration of our  
[sc. human] nature to its original state.

(St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De an.* 156C)

Maximus the Confessor (580–662)<sup>215</sup> lived well after the so-called condemnation of Origen and in particular of his doctrine of apokatastasis. This is probably also why his position in this respect was extremely cautious. Yet, many elements are significant and point to the presence of this doctrine in his thought. What his early Syriac biography, published by Sebastian Brock

<sup>213</sup> In my edition of *De anima* in *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*, I report, and comment on, these glosses and interpolations.

<sup>214</sup> Germanus cited by Photius *Bibl. Cod.* 223: these purported interpolators “dared to instil into the pure and perfectly sound spring of his writings the black and dangerous venom of Origen's error, surreptitiously ascribing this foolish heresy to a man who is famous for his virtue and doctrine.”

<sup>215</sup> Besides the works that I shall cite later in this section, I limit myself to referring to A. Radosavljević, *Τὸ Μυστήριον τῆς Σωτηρίας κατὰ τὸν Ἅγιον Μάξιμον τὸν Ὁμολογητὴν* (Athina, 1975); L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Open Court, 1995<sup>2</sup>); A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London, 1996); *Maximus the Confessor and his Companions—Documents from Exile*, ed. and tr. P. Allen–B. Neil (Oxford, 2004).

in 1973, reports about his intellectual and spiritual formation is significant: namely, that Maximus received his spiritual education in a monastery of “Origenists” in Palestine.<sup>216</sup> In the light of what I shall point out, this detail will prove not at all surprising. It might have been the milieu of Cassian the Sabaite.

Maximus relates 1 Cor 15:28 to the final restoration, as Origen had done, in *Amb.* 7,1092C ff.:<sup>217</sup>

God will truly come to be “*all in all*,” embracing all and giving substance to all in himself, in that *no being will have any more a movement independent of God*, and *no being will be deprived of God’s presence*. Thanks to this presence, we shall be, and shall be called, *gods* and children, body and limbs, because we shall be *restored to the perfection of God’s project*.

The fall marred this project, and this is why, according to Maximus just as to Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and Methodius,<sup>218</sup> God providentially provided death for humans, “administering our salvation, that we, loving non-being [sc. evil], subsequently instructed by suffering, might learn to orient our intellect toward the being.” Death shows the finitude of evil and re-orientes humans toward the Good, who is God and is infinite, and infinitely superior to evil. The ontological priority of God/Good and non-subsistence of evil is the main metaphysical pillar of the doctrine of apokatastasis. Together with restoration, Maximus insists on universal recapitulation or ἀνακεφαλαιώσις, in 1097AD; this will take place in Christ, thanks to “the mystery of the holy coming of God in the human being, made necessary by the transgression.”

Much in the same way as I have shown in the case of Justinian, those which are often still considered to be refutations of doctrines of Origen in Maximus are rather refutations of later Origenistic doctrines. But Maximus, unlike Justinian, never declares that he is criticising Origen—whom, indeed,

<sup>216</sup> The Palestinian and Alexandrian framework of Maximus’s formation is also argued for by C. Boudignon, “Maxime le Confesseur était-il constantinopolitain?” in *Philomathestatos. Studies Jacques Noret*, eds. B. Janssens–B. Roosen–P. van Deun (Leiden, 2004).

<sup>217</sup> Edition CCG 48, now translated with notes by J. Lollar, *Maximus the Confessor: Ambigua to Thomas and Second Letter to Thomas* (Turnhout, 2010). *Ambiguum* 7 is generally regarded as Maximus’s refutation of Origenistic cosmology (see P. Blowers, “The Dialectics and Therapeutics of Desire in Maximus the Confessor,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 65, 2011, 425–451, *praes.* 426; T.T. Tollefsen, “Causality and Movement in St. Maximus’ *Ambiguum* 7,” in *Studia Patristica* 44 [2010] 85–95; cf. A.E. Kattan, *Verleiblichung und Synergie. Grundzüge der Bibelhermeneutik bei Maximus Confessor*, *Vigiliae Christianae* Suppl. 63, [Leiden, 2003]). Maximus, at any rate, neither mentions Origen nor refutes his real ideas.

<sup>218</sup> See my “Death,” in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico*, ed. A. Di Berardino, new English edition, forthcoming in Chicago.



he does not name. This, of course, does not mean that Maximus did not know Origen, but rather suggests that he was not criticising him. One example is in *Amb.* 42: Maximus here rejects the theory of the preexistence of disembodied souls and their embodiment as a punishment due to a precedent sin; now, this is not Origen's doctrine.<sup>219</sup> According to Origen, the *logika* did have a body from the beginning, prior to their fall, a fine and spiritual body, which will also be recovered, incorruptible, in the end. Likewise, the doctrine attacked *ibid.* 1333A, that in the end bodies will completely disappear, was never assertively taught by Origen, who rather claimed with decision that only the Trinity, and not creatures, can subsist without matter.<sup>220</sup> In the same way, the theory of the initial Henad of rational creatures who at a certain point fell and therefore received bodies for the sake of punishment, which Maximus criticises in 1069A (cf. 1328A), is not Origen's, but a subsequent doctrine, based on a radicalised Evagrianism; it is the same doctrine that I have discussed in Justinian, and it is not Origen's doctrine.

What is most remarkable is that, among all of Maximus's criticisms of Origenistic theories,<sup>221</sup> one *absence* is conspicuous: precisely *a refutation of the doctrine of apokatastasis*. This is a notable—albeit regularly unnoticed—exception, since, unlike the doctrines criticised by Maximus, the apokatastasis doctrine was shared by Origen himself and by later Origenists. But Maximus does *not* include it in his refutations of Origenistic theories, which strongly suggests that he found nothing wrong with it. Moreover, Maximus also presents and embraces theories that are authentically Origenian. So, for instance, the notion of the prelapsarian body which he expounds in *Amb.* 45,1353A is similar to that of Origen and of Gregory of Nyssa: a fine, harmonious, immortal, incorruptible, and impassible body. This will be also the risen body in the end. Also, when Maximus affirms that the end will be superior to the beginning,<sup>222</sup> he is in perfect agreement with Origen, according to

<sup>219</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Preexistence of Souls'?"

<sup>220</sup> The crucial issue, as ever, is how to interpret the final *θέωσις*: if it is an *ontological* deification, and all creatures *substantially* become God, so that every difference between Creator and creatures disappears, then creatures would be immaterial, as God is. However, that this is Origen's conception of *θέωσις* is far from being certain and is in fact improbable. See my "Deification."

<sup>221</sup> On which see P. Argarate, "Maximus Confessor's Criticism of Origenism," in *Origeniana VIII*, 1037–1042; Id., "Les fonctions du texte biblique dans la section katanyktique du *Logos Asketikos* de Maxime le Confesseur," in *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity*, eds. L. DiTommaso–L. Turcescu (Leiden, 2008), ch. 1.

<sup>222</sup> He also insists on the correspondence between *ἀρχή* and *τέλος*, e.g. in *Q. ad Thal.* 59: from the end one can know the beginning.

whom the superiority of the end—which is similar, but not identical, to the beginning—will lie in the acquisition of the “likeness” to God and the free and voluntary choice of the Good.<sup>223</sup> This is precisely the notion of the passage from “image” to “likeness” of which Maximus speaks in 1092B. Maximus also highlights in 1076A ff. that the eventual submission to God will have to be voluntary and that free will shall be kept by rational creatures until the final θέωσις. This, too, perfectly corresponds to Origen’s eschatological conceptions. Again, in *Amb.* 42,1328C Maximus is very close to Origen’s notion of the preexistence of the Ideas of all things in God’s Logos-Wisdom when he maintains that the *logoi* of all beings preexisted in God, in the divine Logos.<sup>224</sup> In *Amb.* 7,1085A Maximus himself connects this notion to Pantaeus of Alexandria, who was well known to Origen and called these *logoi* “divine wills.”<sup>225</sup> Maximus also shares Origen’s allegorical method in biblical interpretations. There are many instances of allegoresis of the Bible in his writings, and in *Amb.* 10 he expressly states that the Law must be interpreted spiritually, not in a corporeal and “material” sense.

It is highly debated in scholarship whether Maximus had a conception of apokatastasis that involved universal salvation.<sup>226</sup> Michaud in 1902, Grumel in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* and especially von Balthasar, followed by Polycarp Sherwood, claimed that Maximus did hold such a conception, albeit without professing it overtly; Tollefsen also seems to share this opinion.<sup>227</sup> According to Michaud, Maximus unhesitatingly embraced the doctrine of universal salvation; as for some passages in which he seems

<sup>223</sup> Cf. my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'Anima*, first Integrative Essay.

<sup>224</sup> See my “Clement’s Notion of the Logos.” On Maximus’s doctrine of the *logoi* see A. Louth, “St. Maximos’ Doctrine of the Logoi of Creation,” *Studia Patristica* 48 (2010) 77–84.

<sup>225</sup> See my “Origen, Patristic Philosophy.”

<sup>226</sup> See, e.g., C. Moreschini, *Storia della filosofia patristica* (Brescia, 2004), 733–737; E. Moore, *Origen of Alexandria and St. Maximus the Confessor: An Analysis and Critical Evaluation of their Eschatological Doctrines* (Boca Raton, PhD diss. St. Elias School of Orthodox Theology Seward, NE, 2005), criticises Maximus’s eschatology maintaining that it entails the replacement of human individuality by the divine presence. According to him, “Origen’s humanistic theology” was misinterpreted by Maximus, who built an anti-personalistic system.

<sup>227</sup> E. Michaud, “St. Maxime le Confesseur et l’apokatastase,” *RITH* 10 (1902) 257–272; for Grumel: *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 10,457; for Balthasar see the next note; criticism in B. Daley, “Apokatastasis and ‘Honorable Silence’ in the Eschatology of Maximus,” in *Maximus Confessor*, eds. F. Heinze–C. von Schönborn (Fribourg, 1982), 309–339; T.T. Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford, 2008), 103: “universal salvation, that is to say, a salvation of all created beings”; my review in *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 15,2 (2011) 379–381. I warmly thank Torstein Tollefsen for discussing this with me also viva voce in Norway in March 2012. See also M. Törönen, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford, 2007).

more reluctant to admit it, this is because his tone is there paraenetic and moral, not theological (as in Basil's *Asceticum magnum*, we might add); what is certain is that he never states that hell will be absolutely eternal. According to Grumel, Maximus took over Gregory Nyssen's doctrine of apokatastasis, but with the prudence that was necessary after Justinian. Von Balthasar<sup>228</sup> argues that Maximus refers to the apokatastasis when in *Q. ad Thal.* prol. and 43 he interprets the two trees of Eden, that of life and that of the knowledge of good and evil, in a moral and anthropological sense, but affirms that the spiritual exegesis is better, without however expounding it, in order to "honour with silence [σιωπῇ]" this passage, due to its depth or βάθος (indeed, both in spiritual exegesis and in speculative and research philosophy, for instance in *Amb.* 71,1417AB or 7,1101C, Maximus does follow Origen's method). The same is the case with Maximus's treatment of Christ's victory over evil thanks to his crucifixion;<sup>229</sup> the mystical doctrine to be honoured with silence would be that of universal restoration in the sense of universal salvation, which Maximus does not profess openly, both because after Justinian this seemed more difficult, and for pastoral concerns, which were already present in Origen himself.<sup>230</sup> I would add that, at the end of *Q.* 43, Maximus observes that those who are endowed with that wisdom which comes by grace know that what is κακόν can be such in some respects but not in others, and the same is the case with what is καλόν. And in the prologue Maximus exalts again "the most blessed silence superior to any intellection."<sup>231</sup> That this mystical silence is related to the *telos* is indicated by its very description as μέθεξις, πείρα, and ἀπόλαυσις of ineffable goods, a participation and enjoyment that correspond to insensitivity to this αἰών, evidently because of the immersion in the other. Moreover, in *Q. ad Thal.* 65 Maximus honours with silence the mystical interpretation of the Sabbath (ἡ τελεία μόνη κέκραγε σιγῇ καὶ ἡ παντελὴς καθ' ὑπεροχὴν ἀγνωσία), which is related to the eventual apokatastasis.

<sup>228</sup> *Kosmische Liturgie* (Einsiedeln, 1961<sup>9</sup>), 355–358; Engl. tr. *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (Ignatius Press, 2003). Von Balthasar confirmed his view in *Idem, Was dürfen wir hoffen?* (Einsiedeln, 1986), 51–52.

<sup>229</sup> On Christology and soteriology in Maximus see C. Kavanagh, "The Development of the Sacred Symbol in Relation to Christology in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor," in *Salvation According to the Fathers*, 108–122.

<sup>230</sup> M.S.M. Scott, "Guarding the Mysteries of Salvation: The Pastoral Pedagogy of Origen's Universalism," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18 (2010) 347–368.

<sup>231</sup> Ὑπὲρ νόησιν παμμάκαριςτος σιγῇ. See also *Myst.* 72: the saint "calls through an eloquent and musical silence from the altar of his mind, to that other oft-sung silence in the hidden shrines of the Godhead [...] he joins in it by mystical theology, insofar as possible for a human."

It is interesting to note that this idea that the apokatastasis doctrine must be covered with silence will return in the learned mystic and perhaps Beguine Marguerite Porete (†1310), the author of the *Mirouer des simples âmes*, *Mirror of Simple Souls*.<sup>33</sup> She displays many elements from the Origenian tradition and from Ps. Dionysius's and Eriugena's apophaticism.<sup>34</sup> She describes the mystical union of the soul with God through love, which is a return or apokatastasis to the soul's origin, present in all beings. In this state, the soul can no longer sin. In Ch. 121 Marguerite wraps the eventual apokatastasis in a honorable silence: "Paradise?—this elect says—wouldn't you place them somewhere? For, if this is the case, even killers will have it, if they want to invoke mercy! ... But on this, since you want so, *I shall keep my silence.*"

One of the few texts in which Maximus expresses his view of the eventual apokatastasis is *Q. et dub.* 19.<sup>232</sup> He is commenting on the notion of apokatastasis as found in Gregory of Nyssa and, probably also in order to keep his distance from conceptions of restoration such as those of the "Isochrystoi" or of Bar Sudhaili, which ended up with coinciding with pantheism, he observes that the Church knows three kinds of apokatastasis, which, I note, were all embraced by Origen and Nyssen as well:

- 1) the restoration of an individual to his or her original condition thanks to virtue;
- 2) the restoration of humanity in the resurrection, which is a restoration to incorruptibility and immortality;
- 3) the restoration for which Maximus invokes Gregory of Nyssa as a witness: the eschatological restoration of the faculties of the soul to the state in which they were before being ruined by sin: ἡ τῶν ψυχικῶν δυνάμεων τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ ὑποπεσουσῶν εἰς ὅπερ ἐκτίσθησαν πάλιν ἀποκατάστασις. This spiritual restoration, too, like the resurrection of the body, will be universal, and will take place at the end of all aeons:

For, just as *the whole of human nature* in the resurrection must have back the incorruptibility of the flesh in the time we hope for, so also the subverted *faculties of the soul*, during a *long succession of aeons*, will have to *lose all memories of evilness* [κακία] found in it. Then the soul, after crossing all aeons without finding rest, will arrive at God, who has no limit, and thus, by virtue of knowledge of—if not yet of participation in—the goods, will *recover its faculties* and be *restored to its original state* [εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον

<sup>232</sup> Edition J.H. Declerck, *Maximi Confessoris Quaestiones et dubia*, CCG 10 (Turnhout, 1982).

ἀποκαταστήναι]. And the Creator will be manifested to it, the Creator, who is not responsible [ἀναίτιος] for sin.

Souls that have their faculties, once subverted by sin, restored to their original condition that existed before their contamination with evil, and are purified from evil in such a way as to have not even memories of evil left, will not fail to adhere to the Good, who is God, in the end. Maximus, like Clement, Origen, and other Fathers afterwards, resorts to Plato's formula Θεὸς ἀναίτιος. In fact, it is precisely for the sake of theodicy, in order to defend *Dei iustitiam*—as Rufinus understood very well—that Origen built his whole philosophy of history and theory of apokatastasis.<sup>233</sup>

The close relationship between resurrection and restoration that Maximus posits here derives from Origen and Nyssen, just as the idea that the resurrection of human bodies is only a part of the general resurrection and transformation of the whole universe, and that the restoration of the faculties of the soul will eliminate the effects of sin. Souls—Maximus states—will know God and will realise that God is not the cause of sin and evil. This is in full accord with 1Tim 2:4, “God wants all human beings to be saved and to reach the knowledge of the truth.” Souls will have to pass through purification to be liberated from sin. Thus, they will obtain the knowledge of the divine goods, but not immediately a participation in them (*ibid.* 99). Maximus nowhere says that this participation will be excluded forever. Indeed, that this is not the case is suggested by *In Ps.* 59, PG 90,857A, in which Maximus reflects on universal restoration (see also *Myst.* 7). The transformation of human free will shall take place “thanks to the general transformation and renovation that will occur in the future, at the end of aeons, due to God our Saviour: a universal renovation of the whole human nature, natural, and yet by grace.” If human will itself will be transformed, qua faculty of the human soul, no will shall adhere to evil forever. This is indeed in perfect accord with what Maximus observes in *Q. ad Thal.* 59: because of sin, human noetic faculty—on which human will depends—has been impaired, but the Spirit restores them: ἀποκατέστησε δύναμιν. He insists a lot on the activity of the Spirit aiming at “salvation, the greatest *telos*.” In this connection, Maximus returns to Origen's and Nyssen's idea of *anastasis* as *apokatastasis*: he interprets resurrection also in a spiritual sense, as a “resurrection of virtue” and as a “resurrection of will / intention” (προαιρετική ἀνάστασις). This is characterised by “incorruptibility” and “immortality.” The *telos* is, “after suffering

<sup>233</sup> See my “Origen, Patristic Philosophy.”

with Christ in this world, to be glorified with Christ in the future world, inheriting God by grace, beyond our nature,” in that Christ, “through the power of incarnation, has appropriated the whole of our nature.” The ideas that apokatastasis is a work of grace and that Christ has assumed the whole of humanity through a process of *οἰκείωσις* are typical of Origen and Nyssen. In *Myst.* 82 the notion of apokatastasis merges with that of *θέωσις*: “He awesomely restores me, a human being, to Himself, or better to God, from whom I received and possess my life, and toward whom I am urged by my life-long yearning after the blessed life.” Maximus’s very interpretation of liturgy in the *Mystagogy*, where the entrance, the reading, and the sacramental consecration are interpreted in reference to both the individual soul and the whole Church immediately reminds readers of the very same twofold interpretation in Origen’s commentary on the Song of Songs.

Then, again like Origen, Maximus too introduces the relationship between *ἀρχή* and *τέλος*. And it is precisely when he speaks of *ἀρχή*—which is reflected in the *τέλος*—that he refers to the mystical interpretation that he wants to honour with silence and that, as was suggested by von Balthasar, is likely to be the doctrine of apokatastasis. This is indeed the case not only with the passage on trees in Eden, but also, as I would like to add, with *Amb.* 45,1356C. Here, Maximus chooses to honour with silence the “more sublime” interpretation of the *ἀρχή*, the creation of the first human being without any passion or sin. Now, this *ἀρχή* points to the *τέλος*, with a restoration to a condition free of passions and sins. For the specular identity of *ἀρχή* and *τέλος* is proclaimed by Maximus, in the footsteps of Origen, for instance in *Amb.* 71,1412D: “the first and the last realities are *alike*; moreover, they really *are*, whereas [...] the intermediate realities pass away.” Now, in *Amb. ad Thom.* 5,1048B Maximus declares that in the *ἀρχή* “sin did not belong to human nature”; therefore, neither will it in the end. What is more, in *Amb.* 48,1361D Maximus covers with silence the extreme *τέλος*, beyond this and the future aeon, which will be the extreme culmination of all goods.

What Maximus criticises in *Amb.* 42,1329AB is a kind of automatism in apokatastasis, which indeed late Origenism—but not Origen!—had introduced. This is why he insists on free will, which was surely an extremely important element for Origen himself, who emphasised it in his anti-Gnostic polemic. Maximus observes that humans, by orienting themselves to the Good (i.e., God) or to evil, determine their own closeness to, or remoteness from, God, and therefore their own participation in, or exclusion from, the divine goods. What is not declared by Maximus is that this exclusion will be eternal. Likewise, this is not declared by him in *Amb.* 42,1329B (cf. 65,1392B), in which he states that those who cannot take part in the

Good, who is God, suffer, whereas those who can rejoice. This suffering is by no mean presented as an eternally immutable condition. In the very same way, in *Q. ad Thal.* 59, Maximus observes that union with God for those who are worthy of it will mean beatitude, whereas for those who are unworthy of it will mean suffering, ὀδύνη. Not even here, however, does Maximus state that this suffering will be eternal. Likewise, in *Amb.* 46,1357B, he declares that θέωσις will be bestowed upon those who are worthy of it. And these can include those who, by means of purification, become worthy of it, as Origen and Eusebius thought. According to the latter's formulation, Christ's reign, his διορθωτική καὶ θεραπευτική βασιλεία, will be precisely aimed at making worthy those who will still be unworthy. Beatitude is described by Maximus, in the aforementioned *Q. ad Thal.* 59, as "salvation of the souls" and "enjoyment, fruition" of that to which human beings tend, assimilation to God, participation in God, and θέωσις, the end which will mark the conclusion of all that which is in time and in aeons, perfect ἐνότης that is infinite and transcends human nature. This corresponds to Origen's notion of apokatastasis.

As I said, Maximus insists on free will in order to rule out an "automatic" universal salvation, and such an insistence was already shared by Origen; Maximus insisted on free will against late Origenism and possibly against Manichaean and astral determinism, Origen especially against Valentinianism, but both of them excluded an automatic apokatastasis and stressed the necessity of a free and conscious adhesion to the Good. Maximus too, as I have shown at the beginning, quotes 1 Cor 15:28, which was a biblical pillar of the apokatastasis doctrine for Origen; in *Myst.* 24<sup>234</sup> he observes that God will be all in all for those who will be saved, and for those who have freely used their *logos* (*Amb.* 65,1392D). On this, Origen would have agreed. Salvation, which is offered by God to all, is chosen by the saints (PG 91,25B), those who are sanctified by the Spirit; and the Spirit does not sanctify a free will that refuses it (*Q. ad Thal.* 6,280D). One wonders whether, after the aforementioned regeneration of the faculties of the soul, any free will shall continue to refuse sanctification. God loves all in the same way, but glorifies the virtuous, and "the mystery of salvation belongs to those who want it, not to those who are forced to submit to it" (*Q.* 1309C4–11; *In Or. Dom.* CCG 23,154ss.).<sup>235</sup> Now, this, too, is perfectly in line with Origen's idea that the final submission of all

<sup>234</sup> New critical edition by Chr. Boudignon, *Maximus Confessor, Mystagogia*, CCG 69 (Turnhout, 2011).

<sup>235</sup> See F.W. Norris, "Universal Salvation in Origen and Maximus," in N.M. de S. Camerson, ed., *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (Carlisle, 1992) 35–72.

rational creatures to Christ and to God will be absolutely voluntary, and not forced in the least. The purification of the intellect and of free will—which according to Maximus himself will be regenerated—will entail a voluntary adhesion to the Good, who is God.

In *Car.* 1,71, Maximus states that God, at the end of all aeons, will be united to all humans, both those who are worthy of this and those who are unworthy. Does this mean “those who are unworthy now, but will be worthy of it in the end”? According to Larchet, Maximus’s enigmatic words imply that the eventual *θέωσις* will not embrace all human beings. However, this was precisely God’s plan at the beginning of creation and is still such.<sup>236</sup> And a partial *θέωσις* would seem to contradict the passage that I have quoted at the beginning from *Amb.* 7,1092Cff. Moreover, the work of Christ is “to join together the natural ruptures *in all of universal nature*, and *bring to perfection all the logoi of individual beings*, by which the *unification of the divided* is fulfilled. He reveals and performs God his Father’s ‘Great Will’ [*μεγάλη βουλή*], *recapitulating all beings* in himself, in heaven and on earth [Eph 1:10]” (*Amb. ad Io.* 2,36).

The passages in which Maximus might seem to be speaking of eternal punishment indeed do not contradict the theory of apokatastasis. For in these passages he describes both the last Judgment and otherworldly punishments by means, not of the adjective *αἰδῖος*, but of *αἰώνιος*, which is a typical biblical description for otherworldly “death” or “fire” or “punishment,” but does not mean “eternal”; rather, it means “ancient,” “remote,” “enduring,” even “worldly,” and, as in our case, “otherworldly,” “of the world to come.” The passages are the following,<sup>237</sup> and none of them demonstrates that Maximus could not have supported the apokatastasis theory. In *Q. et Dub.* 173 Maximus explains that all beings are in God, and more specifically in God’s *logoi*: if some of them give up their own *logos* and follow evil things, which have no ontological subsistence, they will undergo the *δίκη αἰώνιος*, which is, not an “eternal condemnation,” but a judgment or “accounting for one’s deeds” in the other world. Analogously, in *Carit.* 1,55 Maximus states that whoever posits him or herself out of the *ἀγάπη* is liable to the *αἰώνιος κρίσις*, which is the judgment in the other world, but by no means an eternal condemnation. In 1,56 Maximus claims that whoever hates other humans deserves

<sup>236</sup> J.C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l’homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris, 1996), 652ff.

<sup>237</sup> Moreschini, *Storia*, 733–737, adduces most of these—regularly interpreting *αἰώνιος* as “eternal”—as proofs that Maximus did not believe in apokatastasis.



an αἰώνιος κόλασις, which means a punishment in the world to come, and not an eternal punishment. Likewise, in 1,57 whoever speaks against other human beings deserves a κόλασις αἰώνιος, which is again a punishment in the next world, just as in 2,34, in which passions and ignorance are said to be worthy of κόλασις αἰώνιος. In *Lib. Ascet.* 27 Maximus mentions Isaiah's prophecy concerning the τόπος αἰώνιος, which is the otherworldly place in which sinners will receive punishment; their fire—according to famous biblical quotation—will not be quenched, οὐ σβεσθήσεται, and their worm will not die, οὐ τελευτήσεται. These traditional expressions indicate that the fire and worm of the other world are different from those of this world, where fire can be put off and worms die; they cannot be taken as evidence that Maximus supported eternal damnation (indeed, they are tranquilly referred to by Origen and many other supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis).

Maximus repeatedly identifies life eternal—really eternal and without end: αἰδῖος, not αἰώνιος—with the eventual apokatastasis, which is associated with the elimination of sin. God will “give to the human nature, through *pathos*, *apatheia*; through tribulations, relief, and through death, *life absolutely eternal* [τὴν αἰδῖον ζωὴν], and will thus *have it restored* [πάλιν ἀποκατέστησεν]” (*Q. ad Thal.* 61). What is even more, in *In Or. Dom.* l. 82 Maximus describes the absolutely eternal life as the restoration of human nature freed from sin:

participation in *absolutely eternal life* [αἰδίου ζωῆς], *restoration* [ἀποκατάστασιν] of the human nature, which will return to harmony with itself in *apatheia*, *destruction of the law of sin* [νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας κατάλυσιν].

An illuminating depiction of Maximus's eschatological conception is found in *Amb.* 65, in which he is engaging with the interpretation of Nazianzen's discourse concerning the eighth day, which is described as the first, the last, and indestructible, on which the souls will even cease to celebrate the Sabbath. He surely remembered Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation as well: in *In Inscr. Ps.* 83–84 Nyssen identified the eighth day with the final day in which Christ will rise as *Sol Iustitiae* and will never set. And in *In sext. Ps.* 188–189 Gregory identifies the seven days with time (χρόνος) and the movement of the world, and the eighth day with the eternal new creation.<sup>238</sup> Maximus offers three exegeses: in the first he observes that the seven days

<sup>238</sup> See C. McCambley, “On the Sixth Psalm, Concerning the Octave, by Saint Gregory of Nyssa,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 32 (1987) 39–50.

indicate time and the sequence of aeons, at the end of which there will come the cessation of all aeons and the access to “being always” (τὸ ἀεὶ εἶναι) by grace. This condition will be peace and quiet, without beginning or end, when, after the movements<sup>239</sup> (according to the meaning that “movement” bears in Origen, as moral movement of choice toward good or evil) of the limited beings, there will be the manifestation of the realities that are beyond any limit and measure. Souls will then rejoice in the Sabbath, when they will receive peace after their movement. The end will be the eighth day, God’s Parousia, which determines “being always well” (τὸ εὖ ἀεὶ εἶναι) with a participation in it, or else “being always badly” (τὸ κακῶς ἀεὶ εἶναι) to those who have used “the *logos* of being” against nature.

Now, the very notion of being eternally in evil would heavily contradict Maximus’s theory of the ontological non-subsistence of evil, which he shares with Origen and Nyssen and which he declares, for instance, in *Amb.* 42,1332A: “What is absolutely deprived of rationality and wisdom is only evil, whose being is characterised by *non-subsistence*: may we never imagine that God is the creator of evil!” Likewise, evil is declared to be non-being in *Amb.* 20,1237C, in which the “children of perdition,” “hell,” and so on are identified by Maximus with “those who, in their own mental disposition, have put *non-being* at their own basis, and in their ways have become similar to *non-being* in all respects.” Maximus does not go on to say that this situation is eternal; in fact, it could not be such, because it would resolve into non-being. But divine Providence prevents every creature from ending up into non-being. Maximus insists on the notion that evil is non-being also in *Amb.* 7,1085A. What is more, precisely in his mystical interpretation of the Sabbath in *Q. et dub.* 10, he understands that eschatological “day” as the giving up of all evil and its complete vanishing. This clearly excludes both that evil will exist eternally and that creatures will subsist in evil eternally. Therefore, in Maximus’s view, a permanence in evil αἰωνίως can be conceived of, but not a permanence in evil αἰδίως. For evil is radically excluded from the eventual apokatastasis.

And that it is αἰδίος that characterises apokatastasis for Maximus is confirmed by his statement in *Amb.* 10, in which he describes the eighth day, the last, that of apokatastasis, as αἰδίος, and not as αἰώνιος, as a “joy and happiness that cannot dissipate, as a day without sunset and without end.” More

<sup>239</sup> On the meaning of κίνησις in Maximus see L. Chvátal, “Maxime le Confesseur et la tradition philosophique: à propos d’une définition de la *kinesis*,” *Studia Patristica* 48 (2010) 117–122.

generally, it is significant that in Maximus *only* αἰώνιος, never ἀῖδιος, is used to describe otherworldly punishment, future death, or the fire in the next world. Ἀῖδιος, indeed, is *never* employed by Maximus for future death, fire, and punishment (except for the chains of the wicked angels in a biblical quotation in *Q. ad Thal.* 11), although this adjective is often used by him and is indeed Maximus's preferred word when he speaks in his own voice (i.e., without quoting Scripture, where αἰώνιος prevails), and it often refers to eternal life, blessedness, and apokatastasis.<sup>240</sup>

A further confirmation is that Maximus in *Dub.* 65 states that τὸ ἀεὶ εἶναι is related to the mystical celebration of the Sabbath, but even this will pass away on the eighth day. At this point is probably to be placed the “being αἰδίως” (whereas for previous stages only a “being in time” or “being αἰώνιος” is possible), which Maximus, here too, honours with silence. In this “being αἰδίως” it is impossible that any shade of evil may subsist. The profound gap, from aeons to eternity, that marks the passage to the eighth day is clear from the last two alternative interpretations of Nazianzen's aforementioned “eighth day” offered by Maximus in *Amb.* 65: the seventh day is to go beyond the moods conforming to virtue and the arguments conforming to contemplation, but the eighth day is the complete transformation, by grace, of all that which has been done and contemplated; or else—in an alternative exegesis that is redolent of Evagrius—the seventh day is the impossibility that follows active philosophy, whereas the eighth is the wisdom that follows contemplation. All activities are over only in the very end.

Indeed, that Maximus envisaged a progress also in the world to come is evident from other passages as well. One is *Amb.* 59, in the context of the Logos-Christ's *descensus ad inferos*. Here, Maximus overtly states that adhesion to God is still possible after death, through faith and conversion. That Maximus admitted of a spiritual progress in the next aeon, after universal resurrection, is manifestly shown also by *Amb.* 63, in which he identifies the first Sunday with the resurrection, but after this Sunday there is the New Sunday and many other feasts that lead to a progressive participation in the goods and are called “mysteries” (again with an eye to the silence that must cover the very last things). In *Amb.* 50,1368D, too, Maximus depicts the same succession of present aeon → place after death → future aeon with the resurrection → feasts and purifications that come *after* the resurrection → *telos*. After those purifications and feasts, which are mysteries, the last stage, the

<sup>240</sup> On the use of ἀῖδιος and αἰώνιος in Maximus see Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new ed., 222–226.

*telos*, is a complete peace, which is not, however, immobility. It is an ἀεικίνητος στάσις, a “rest in perpetual movement.” This is, of course, similar to Nyssen’s notion of epestatic movement, which is an infinite going toward God and growing in God, and which infinitely characterises the apokatastasis.

In *Amb.* 42,1329B Maximus returns to the above-mentioned categories of “being,” “being well,” and “being always”; the last signifies the permanence in being that was donated by God to all creatures, whose *logoi* pre-existed the present world in God. Maximus follows Origen in seeing these *logoi* as eternally present in the mind of God, without ἀρχή.<sup>241</sup> “Being badly” cannot be eternal. If the author is really Maximus,<sup>242</sup> a confusion between the ontological and the ethical planes would be surprising. For αἰεὶ εἶναι belongs to the ontological sphere, whereas εἶ and κακῶς εἶναι belong to the ethical sphere. And Maximus himself, immediately after, returns to the theme of the ontological non-subsistence of evil (1332A), and admits that “the being of evil is characterised by non-subsistence.” As a consequence, it is impossible to continue to subsist in evil eternally. This seems to be confirmed by what is affirmed by Maximus soon after concerning Christ’s return. This will determine “the transformation of the universe [ἐπὶ μεταστοιχειώσει τοῦ παντός] and the salvation [σωτηρίᾳ] of our souls and bodies” (1332D), because Christ “leads and invites all to his glory, insofar as possible, with the power of his inhumanation, being the initiator of the salvation of all [τῆς πάντων σωτηρίας], and completely purifies imperfections in all [τὰς ἐν ὅλοις ἀνακαθαίροντα κηλίδας]” (1333A). Purification in *Q. et dub.* 1,10 is said to occur at the last Judgment through the very process of judgment for those who have both sins and good deeds,<sup>243</sup> whereas those who are already perfect will not even undergo judgment. Moreover, *ibid.* 159 [1,74] Maximus identifies otherworldly purification with the fire in 1 Cor 2:13 ff., in which some are said to be saved immediately and others through fire, but no one is said not to be saved.<sup>244</sup> Indeed, in *Amb.* 21,1252B, Maximus states that those who have sinned following passions, in the future world will remain far from the relationship with God, and

<sup>241</sup> See my “Clements’ Notion” and Tollefsen’s *Christocentric Cosmology*.

<sup>242</sup> Panayiotis Tzamalikos does not think so. I am grateful to him for discussing this point with me *per litteras*.

<sup>243</sup> Οὗτοι ἐν τῷ δικαστηρίῳ τῆς κρίσεως ἔρχονται κακεῖ διὰ τῆς τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ φαύλων πράξεων ἀντεξετάσεως οἷον εἴπερ ἢ τῶν ἀγαθῶν πλάστιγξ ἐπιβαρῆσει, καθαίρονται τῆς κολάσεως.

<sup>244</sup> Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι αἰῶνι τὰ ἔργα τῆς ἀμαρτίας εἰς ἀνυπαρξίαν χωροῦσιν, τῆς φύσεως τὰς ἰδίας δυνάμεις σώας ἀπολαμβάνουσιν διὰ τοῦ πυρὸς τῆς κρίσεως. The faculties of the soul will be purified and restored by the otherworldly fire.

this will be their punishment, even for very many aeons. But I have already demonstrated that Maximus, like Origen and Nyssen, thought that there will come and *end* of all aeons, and this will be precisely the eventual apokatastasis.

In *Q. ad Thal.* 65, a passage that I have already cited briefly, Maximus interprets the eschatological Sabbath mystically and honours it with silence and unknowing (τελεία σιγή, παντελῆς ἀγνωσία, the latter being typically Ps.-Dionysian). This reinforces the supposition that what Maximus honours with silence is the mystery of apokatastasis. The mystical last day is described again as the cessation of every movement and “the perfect and accomplished passage to the divine” (πρὸς τὸ θεῖον τελεία διάβασις); it is the sum and culmination of all sacred feasts. This last day, which is the *telos*, will have no end, because there will be no dimensionality any more,<sup>245</sup> “when human nature will be united to the Logos [συναφθῇ τῷ Λόγῳ] by grace.” Maximus describes again this eternal condition as “rest,” a “rest with no end” (ἀπεράντου στάσεως), and at the same time “a rest in perpetual movement [στάσιν ἀεικίνητον], which will *eternally* [ἀϊδίως] take place around the Only One, the One and the Same” (περὶ τὸ ταῦτόν καὶ ἓν καὶ μόνον). This, as Maximus observes, “is a stable seat immediately around the first Cause of the beings that have been created by it.”<sup>246</sup> The Logos is “propitiation” because,

by assuming in itself what is ours, became like us, absolving us from accusations, and with the gift of grace will *deify* [θεοποιῶν] our sinful nature [...] the connective bond of our transformation into *immortality* [πρὸς ἀθανασίαν μεταποιήσεως].

This is why Maximus calls Christ σκηνοπηγία, which reminds one of the end of Nyssen's *De anima*, in which σκηνοπηγία represents the final resurrection–restoration, that is, the reconstitution of both body and soul to their original condition, according to God's plan, and the liberation from sin and evil. This is a holistic understanding of resurrection, on both the physical and the spiritual plane, which was typical of Origen and was continued by Nyssen.<sup>247</sup> That it is present also in Maximus is evident from his insistence, in this very passage, on the necessity of a spiritual exegesis of Scripture, and, in this case,

<sup>245</sup> Μὴ δεχομένη πέρας ἐν ᾧ παντελῶς οὐκ ἔστι διάστασις. Dimensionality is what, for Gregory of Nyssa, characterises the present, heavy corporeality as opposed to the soul. See his *De anima* and my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull'Anima*.

<sup>246</sup> Ἄμεσον εἶναι περὶ τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ πεποιημένων μόνιμον ἴδρυσιν.

<sup>247</sup> For Origen see my “Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah: Resurrection Announced throughout the Bible and its Twofold Conception,” *Augustinianum* 48 (2008) 59–78; for Gregory my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*.

of the feast of the Tabernacles (θεωρίας πνευματικῆς, and τῷ ὕψει τῆς πνευματικῆς θεωρίας).

At 575 Maximus provides a crucial clue. For he speaks of the sanctification provided by God to those who are still in need of it through a fire that is purifying, that they too may participate in God.<sup>248</sup> Thus, it seems that when elsewhere he affirms that the final participation in God will be bestowed only on those who will be worthy of it, or on the saints, he means those who will be sanctified and purified; precisely those who will still be unworthy will be purified and sanctified.

One further consideration. If Maximus draws on Origen and Nyssen for his own conception of the ἀρχή, it is very probable *per se* that he also drew on them for his picture of the τέλος. Indeed, his sources are all Origenian thinkers; he too, as I have exemplified, supported the thesis of the ontological non-subsistence of evil, for instance in the prologue to his *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, and, like Gregory Nyssen in *De anima*, deemed πάθη to be secondary growths of the soul, not belonging to the human being by essence, and not intrinsic to it; Maximus also espoused Origen's and Gregory of Nyssa's doctrine of the so-called "double creation" and much else from Nyssen's anthropology.<sup>249</sup> The secondary nature of gender distinction and procreation came from Nyssen to Maximus, who also insisted that the human being who is in the image and likeness of God has a (fine) body but no gender distinction, an idea that will be taken over by Eriugena long afterwards.<sup>250</sup> Likewise, Maximus's interpretation of the "skin tunics" derives from Gregory Nyssen and Origen. Maximus shares with Origen and Gregory of Nyssa a great deal about the ἀρχή, for instance in *Amb.* 8; it is thus even more probable that he shares much with them in his conception of the τέλος, all the more in that the close connection between ἀρχή and τέλος is stressed in *Q. ad Th.* 59. For Maximus, the human being was created free from corruption and sin, and in the very *telos* it will be again free from corruption and sin. Maximus shares Origen's and Nyssen's theme of the restoration of the human being to its primitive integrity thanks to the incarnation of the Logos (*Q. ad Thal.* 21). The eternal project of God for the human being has been marred by sin; one of the consequences, from the anthropological point of view, is underlined in *Q. et dub.* 7: Maximus observes that

<sup>248</sup> Ἀφιερούμενων Θεῷ καὶ τῷ πυρὶ τῆς ἐν πνεύματι χάριτος πρὸς τὴν θείαν λῆξιν ὁλοκαυστουμένων.

<sup>249</sup> G.S. Gasparro, "Aspetti di doppia creazione nell'antropologia di Massimo il Confessore," in Ead., *Origene e la tradizione*, 297–324.

<sup>250</sup> See below in this same chapter the section on Eriugena.

“God’s plan was not that we should be born through unions of corruption, but it was transgression to introduce marriage because of Adam’s sin” (cf. *ibid.* 61; *Amb.* 41).<sup>251</sup> Now, if sin has spoilt God’s original plan for humanity, this will be fully realised in the end. Apokatastasis is inaugurated by Christ with his virginal birth—which interrupts the cycle of γένεσις and φθορά—and will finally realise God’s plan. This train of thought goes back to Origen (e.g., *Comm. in Rom.* 5,9) and Didymus (*C. Manich.* 7,8). Therefore, in *Amb.* 41,1305C,1309AD–1312A Maximus claims that, as is stated in Gal 3:28, gender differences, which assimilate the human being to animals, disappear in Christ. In Christ, human nature is restored in its perfection, in its lost ἀπάθεια and ἀφθαρσία, so that Christ accomplishes the apokatastasis of human nature (*Q. ad Thal.* 42). This is also the focus of *Q. ad Thal.* 61. Christ’s “inhumanation” is what makes apokatastasis possible: once again, it is clear that for Maximus, just as for Origen and Gregory Nyssen, the eventual restoration depends on Christ. Christocentrism is a feature, not only of Maximus’s cosmology—which has been well illustrated by Tollefsen<sup>252</sup>—, but also of his eschatology. There can be no apokatastasis without Christ. Thus, in *Amb.* 3,1276AB as well, Maximus remarks that Jesus’s virginal birth is indispensable to the restoration of human nature, which culminates in its θέωσις.

Another important point is Maximus’s insistence—similar to that of Clement and Origen—on the omnipresence of divine Providence, for instance in *Amb.* 10,1108C: “it is present to all, in all,” in order to help all to reach virtue. Maximus does not see the action of divine Providence in contrast with each one’s free will, just as Origen was convinced that there is no contradiction between Providence, which will fully achieve its aim at apokatastasis, and individual free will, so that he stated, with a theological passive, that “Providence is applied to all, respecting each one’s freedom of will.” That Maximus, too, identified the end of divine Providence, or “educative economy,” with universal apokatastasis is clear from *Amb.* 42:

Look for the main reason (*logos*) for the birth of the human being, a *logos* that keeps its stability and never abandons it; try also to determine which is the modality of its education due to sin, in accord with God’s *educative economy*, whose end is *the correction of those who are educated*, and the *perfect restoration* to the *logos* of their birth, *that is, apokatastasis*.

<sup>251</sup> On Maximus’s anthropology see J. Gavin, “They Are Like Angels in Heaven.” *Angelology and Anthropology in the Thought of Maximus the Confessor* (Rome, 2009).

<sup>252</sup> In *Christocentric Cosmology*.

Christ is accordingly defined by Maximus “the initiator of the *salvation of all*” (*Amb.* 42,1333A), who “leads *all* to his glory,” having taken up humanity, and “purifies the stains of *all universe*.” The crucial role of Christ in apokatastasis is highlighted again in *Amb.* 31,1280A: “Christ-God divinely accomplishes in himself *the salvation of all*”; “we do not hesitate to believe that, as his prayer to the Father says, we shall be where he is, he who is the first fruits of the human species [...] and thus he completes the body of the one who is completed in all and for all, a body that fills all and is filled by all” (1280D). It seems that for Maximus the eventual apokatastasis passes through the ἀνακεφαλαίωσις of all in Christ.

In *Amb.* 41,1308D, indeed, Maximus presents Christ as the one who realises the “great intention of God the Father,” according to Isa 9:5. Origen had already interpreted the μεγάλη βουλή of God in the sense of the apokatastasis. Maximus explains that Christ can realise God’s intention in that he “recapitulates in himself all beings, those in heaven and those on earth, because they were also created in him.” They were created in Christ-Logos, the Wisdom of God, which contains in itself the *logoi* of all beings and “applies providence to *all* and brings *all beings* to unity [...] it connects *all of them*, those in heaven and those on earth.” The relation of apokatastasis to unity and, in turn, to the “theology of the image”—both were already features of Origen’s thought on apokatastasis—returns in Maximus’s *Scholia* on Ps. Dionysius, PG 4, 220D, in which he observes that all rational creatures are images of God and united to God and to one another: “Note that Dionysius calls ‘ultra-celestial lights’ the souls and all the intellects, and says that *all these living substances have been unified* [...] They are all united to one another, without mixture and confusion. They are *images of God* [θεοειδεῖς] and, in proportion to themselves, *they participate in God’s ultra-unitary unit* [ὑπερηνωμένης ἐνώσεως]. These lights are clearly *unities*.” The language is remindful of Ps. Dionysius.

The importance of Christ in relation to the restoration of human nature is further made clear in *Amb. ad Thom.* 5,1049A: “becoming a human being, [Christ] lifted human nature together with himself, making it into a mystery.” I have already pointed out how insistently Maximus characterises the *telos* as a mystery, and how important the theme of mystery and silence is for him in relation to the eventual apokatastasis. The mystery of humanity, thanks to Christ, will be revealed in the end. The centrality of Christ to the restoration of humanity is even more evident *ibid.* 4,1044AD.1045B: Christ

destroyed our worse element, i.e. the law of sin that comes from transgression [...] saved the human beings who were imprisoned by sin, and, paying in himself the price of our redemption, had them participate even in divine power



[...] he accomplished *the complete salvation of humanity*, making his own all that our humanity is [...] he became by nature a new Adam, thus replacing the old [...] he wanted to render me *master of the devil*, who, by means of deception, mastered as a tyrant [...] through passible flesh he *deified the whole of humanity*, who had become earth due to corruption [...] in view of the perfect *submission through which he will bring us to the Father after saving us* and making us conformed to himself for the effectiveness of grace.

This is precisely what constitutes “the *mystery* of our salvation.” The notion of mystery is again associated with the salvation and restoration of humanity. Like Origen and Gregory Nyssen, thus, Maximus also meditates on 1 Cor 15:28, a fundamental text for apokatastasis, which, being a mystery, requires silence. That it is out of circumspection that Maximus avoids to speak of apokatastasis is also evident from the fact that the expressions I have quoted concerning salvation and the eventual deification of the entire humanity by grace are not direct statements of Maximus, but are ascribed by him to “a man, holy in thought and life.” There is no further specification about his identity, but it is patent that this figure, who is presented very positively, was a useful spokesperson for Maximus to express his own thought, when compromising, through a sort of “veil.”

The characterisation of apokatastasis as both mystery and ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις returns in *Q. ad Thal.* 60, in which the aim of God, τέλος and σκοπός, from the beginning, even before the creation of this world, is identified with the mystery of Christ and individuated in the union of the divinity with humanity that takes place in Christ, and in the

εἰς τὸν Θεὸν ἢ τῶν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πεποιημένων ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις

recapitulation into God of those who were created by God.

This recapitulation is said to be the aim of divine Providence, and the “mystery or the μεγάλη βουλή of God,” anterior to all aeons. Christ-Logos announces it. One of his ἐπίνοιαι comes precisely from the aforementioned description in Isa 9:5: “Announcer of the Great Intention/Counsel.” So what does Christ announce? He announces and shows “the abyssal depth of the Father’s *Goodness*.” For God is the Good itself, absolute Good, metaphysical Good. This is the ontological foundation of apokatastasis, which also implies evil’s non-being. There is a perfect convergence with what I have shown from *Amb.* 41. The end will be when all movements of creatures will cease and these will know the One in which they will have been made worthy in a stable manner, in “the fruition, offered to them, inalterable and always the same, of the One who will be known by them.” God, qua supreme Good, will be known and enjoyed by creatures.

Maximus goes on to explain that we humans “will receive the *deification* unceasingly realised beyond nature” by means of the Son, who, “through incarnation, accomplishes in his person *the mystery of our salvation* [...] For it was necessary that the creator of the substance of beings according to nature [i.e., Christ-Logos] be also the author of *the deification* [θέωσις], by grace, of the creatures that have come into being [τῶν γεγονότων], that the giver of ‘well being’ [εἶ εἶναι] might also appear as the giver, by grace, of ‘permanent well being’ [ἀεὶ εἶ εἶναι].” Here there is no confusion between ontological and ethical planes: εἶ εἶναι and ἀεὶ εἶ εἶναι are both ontological categories and, as such, are both presented as given by God. Not only did Maximus envisage a universal apokatastasis, which he regarded as a mystery, but, like Origen and Gregory Nyssen, he definitely had it depend on Christ and on the mystery of Christ. This is why Maximus, again like Origen, insists so much on the role of divine grace in the mystery of salvation.

### *Anastasius of Sinai*

Anastasius came from Alexandria, where the Origenian tradition was strong, and was the abbot of the monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai in the VII century. Origen and Gregory Nyssen were his main inspirers, along with Nazianzen and Ps. Dionysius.<sup>253</sup> It is telling that his *Sermo I in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei*<sup>254</sup> was ascribed to Gregory of Nyssa for centuries. He countered miaphysitism, especially in *Hodegos*.<sup>255</sup> The most relevant work to the present investigation is his *Contemplatio analogica in Hexaëmeron*,<sup>256</sup> heavily influenced by Gregory Nyssen; it allegorises the Biblical narrative of creation as the new creation in Christ, the new Adam. One part of his *Quaestiones et responsiones* is authentic,<sup>257</sup> another

<sup>253</sup> On him see briefly K.H. Uthemann, “Anastasius the Sinaite,” in *Patrology. The Eastern Fathers from the Council of Chalcedon (451) to John of Damascus (†750)*, ed. A. Di Berardino et al. (Cambridge, 2006), 313–331.

<sup>254</sup> Ed. K.-H. Uthemann, CCG 12 (Turnhout, 1985).

<sup>255</sup> Ed. K.-H. Uthemann, *Anastasiū Sinaitae Viae dux* (Turnhout, 1981). Cfr. J. Haldon, “The Works of Anastasius of Sinai,” in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, I, ed. A. Cameron–L. Conrad (Princeton, 1992), 107–147.

<sup>256</sup> Ed. C.A. Kueh–J.D. Baggarly, *Anastasius of Sinai. Hexaëmeron* (Rome, 2007), who also explain in the introduction how the authenticity of this work is not out of question, but even in case Anastasius is not the author, it does reflect his ideas. Problems of attribution of his works also derive from the confusion between him and Anastasius of Antioch (VI cent.) in antiquity; on the latter see G. Weiss, *Studien zum Leben, zu den Schriften und zur Theologie des Patriarchen Anastasius I. von Antiochien (559–598)* (München, 1965).

<sup>257</sup> Ed. J.A. Munitz–M. Richard, CCG 59 (Turnhout, 2006), 4–165.

is spurious.<sup>258</sup> In Q. 19,11, which is authentic, Anastasius takes over Gregory Nyssen's equation of *anastasis* with apokatastasis: "our holy Fathers define resurrection as the restoration to the original condition of the first human being," τὴν πρὸς τὸ ἀρχαῖον τοῦ πρώτου ἀνθρώπου ἀποκατάστασιν. This is also the idea of Maximus the Confessor, and is a strong presupposition of apokatastasis. Anastasius's concern about the possible divulgence of doctrines that only the initiated should learn (*in Hex.* praef. 3, precisely in connection with the purification of souls) reminds one of Origen's identical concern for the secrecy of the doctrine of apokatastasis, which should not be divulged among those who are spiritually immature and would be harmed by it.

### *Isaac of Nineveh*

St. Isaac of Nineveh, a seventh-century Syriac mystic,<sup>259</sup> was acquainted with Ps. Dionysius's and Evagrius's writings, which he read in Syriac translations, including Evagrius's *Kephalaia Gnostica* in their non-expurgated version.<sup>260</sup> Isaac's terminology of contemplation is often reminiscent of Evagrius, although he does have innovations of his own. Besides Ephrem, Macarius, Abba Isaiah, John the Solitary,<sup>261</sup> and Mark the Monk, he probably knew Bar Sudhaili as well. He was appointed bishop of Nineveh, but

<sup>258</sup> Ed. *ibid.* 171–232.

<sup>259</sup> On mysticism and asceticism in the Syriac tradition see now G. Kessel–K. Pinggéra, *A Bibliography of Syriac Ascetic and Mystical Literature* (Leuven, 2011); also *Les mystiques syriaques*, ed. A. Desreumaux, *Études syriaques* 8 (Paris, 2011); R. Darling Young–M.J. Blanchard (eds), *To Train his Soul in Books. Syriac Asceticism in Early Christianity. Festschrift S.H. Griffith* (Washington, 2011).

<sup>260</sup> On these see my new edition and commentary, forthcoming in Leiden–Atlanta. On Evagrius's influence on Isaac see S. Brock, "Discerning the Evagrian in the Writings of Isaac of Nineveh," *Adamantius* 15 (2009) 60–72; S. Chialà, "Evagrio Pontico negli scritti di Isacco di Ninive," *ibid.* 73–84; P. Géhin, "La dette d'Isaac de Ninive envers Évagre le Pontique," *Connaissance des Pères de l'Église* 119 (2010) 40–52. On Isaac's life see at least (with an Italian abstract) H. Dybski, "Le più antiche fonti sulla vita di Isacco il Siro vescovo di Ninive," *Vox Patrum* 28 (2008) 157–169.

<sup>261</sup> See S. Brock, "John the Solitary, *On Prayer*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1979) 84–96; A. Muravjev, "Macarian or Evagrian," in *Origeniana VIII*, ed. L. Perrone (Leuven, 2003), 1185–1192; *Abba Isaia of Scetis. Ascetic Discourses* (Kalamazoo, 2002). John the Solitary probably lived in the first half of the fifth century and exercised a great influence on later authors with his works on the soul, on prayer, and his letters. Isaiah of Scetis (fourth-fifth cent.) is the author of *Ascetic Discourses*. He moved from Egypt to Palestine, where he led an exemplary ascetic life. He was inspired by Origenian authors such as Evagrius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Cassian.

retired after five months to live as a hermit. His work, in a *First*, a *Second*, and a *Third Part*, was destined to the monks. The *First Part* (82 homilies) was soon translated into Greek;<sup>262</sup> the long-lost *Second Part*, discovered in 1983 in the Bodleian Library and published by Sebastian Brock,<sup>263</sup> was never translated into Greek and comprises 41 chapters, the third of which is the longest and made up of 400 short *Kephalaia*; the *Third* (17 homilies, three of which are found in earlier collections) was the last to be discovered, in a manuscript in Teheran from about 1900; some extracts, however, exist in much more ancient manuscripts as well.<sup>264</sup>

Three main pillars support Isaac's doctrine of apokatastasis:

- 1) one is the therapeutic conception of all the sufferings decided by God, an idea that Isaac shared with Clement, Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and most supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis;
- 2) the second is the notion that the human soul, the image of God, however heavily tainted by sin, will certainly be purified and return pure (and the Holy Spirit plays an important role in this<sup>265</sup>);

<sup>262</sup> See S.P. Brock, "Syriac into Greek at Mar Saba: The Translation of St. Isaac the Syrian," in *The Sabaite Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present*, ed. J. Patrich (Leuven, 2001), 201–208: by the eighth-ninth century, at the Mar Saba monastery the bulk of Isaac's homilies were translated into Greek; P. Bedjan, *Mar Isaacus Ninevita, De perfectione religiosa* (Paris–Leipzig, 1909), was the first complete Syriac edition, then translated by A.J. Wensinck, *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh* (Amsterdam, 1923; Wiesbaden 1969 repr.). Other translations are instead based on the Greek translation: D. Miller, *The Ascetic Homilies of St Isaac the Syrian, Translated by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery* (Boston, 1984; 2011); J. Touraille, *Isaac le Syrien. Oeuvres spirituelles* (Paris, 1981). A recent translation is also M. Hansbury, *St Isaac of Nineveh: On the Ascetic Life* (Crestwood, NY, 1989). Besides Greek, the *First Part* was translated into Arabic, Georgian, Slavonic, Ethiopian, Latin, Romanian, Russian, Italian, French, Portuguese, and Catalan.

<sup>263</sup> Ed. S.P. Brock, *Isaac of Nineveh (Isaac the Syrian). The Second Part, Chapters IV–XL*, CSCO Syri 224/5 (Louvain, 1995).

<sup>264</sup> S. Chialà, *Isacco di Ninive. Discorsi ascetici, Terza collezione* (Magnano, Biella, 2004), has offered an Italian translation. An English translation is expected from Sebastian Brock. The critical edition of the Syriac text is provided by S. Chialà, *Isacco di Ninive. Terza Collezione*, CSCO 637, Syri 246 (Leuven, 2011); the Italian translation follows in CSCO 638, Syri 247 (Leuven, 2011). See also A. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom* (Philadelphia, 2006), 184–188, and S. Brock, *The Wisdom of St. Isaac of Nineveh* (Piscataway, NJ, 2006), with a note on the discovery of the *Third Part*. An Italian translation (and the first Western translation) from Isaac's work preserved in Arabic is by V. Ianari, *Isacco di Ninive. Grammatica di vita spirituale* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan, 2009).

<sup>265</sup> See S. Seppälä, "The Holy Spirit in Isaac of Nineveh and East Syrian Mysticism," in D.V. Twomey–J.E. Rutherford (eds.), *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2008* (Dublin, 2010), 127–150.

- 3) the third, and the most highlighted by Isaac, is also the most important: God's infinite, merciful love and providence.<sup>266</sup>

The omnipresence of God's providence, which always enfolds all human beings, although it can be seen only by those who are pure and close to God, is stressed in *Hom.* 23,B176, 5,B64, and elsewhere. In this, Isaac seems to me to be reminiscent of Diodore of Tarsus's insistence on divine providence, and specifically on a providence conceived as leading to the eventual apokatastasis.<sup>267</sup> This impression of mine is reinforced by the consideration that in his *Second Part*, 39,8–13, Isaac traces back the doctrine of apokatastasis precisely to Diodore and Theodore, as two authoritative antecedents.<sup>268</sup> Both of them, according to his testimony, supported this theory and taught that the duration of one's punishments in the other world will be commensurate with the gravity of one's sins and will not be infinite. In particular, the passages that Isaac quotes come from Diodore's *De providentia* and from Theodore's *Contra defensores peccati originalis* and, as I have analysed when I have treated of these Antiochene theologians, these passages were subsequently quoted by Solomon of Bostra in his *Book of the Bee* as well, but in a longer excerpt.

Isaac, insisting on divine providence no less than Diodore did, avers that God's providence aims at saving all human beings: "God always looks for ways, even the tiniest, to have us justified, to forgive humans for their sins [...] because God *wants our salvation*, and not reasons to torment us" (*Second Part* 40,12). For Isaac, God's providence is the expression of God's love. The clearest proof of God's love is Christ's death on the cross: God did all this for no other reason than *to manifest his love to the world*, that we, thanks to a greater love that arises from the awareness of this, might be conquered

<sup>266</sup> See S. Chialà, *Dall'ascesi eremitica alla misericordia infinita* (Florence, 2002). On 56–63 Chialà rightly hypothesised—following Bedjan—that the polemics that surrounded Isaac's theology already during his lifetime and afterwards were essentially due to his doctrine of apokatastasis. See also H. Alfeyev, *The Spiritual World of Isaac the Syrian* (Kalamazoo, 2000) with a good overview of Isaac's life and works (14–34), thought (35–60), and ascetic teachings (61–297), and a section devoted to eschatology (274–297); on the last see now also P. Hagman, *The Asceticism of Isaac of Nineveh* (Oxford, 2010), 197–212.

<sup>267</sup> See above, Ch. 3, section on Diodore.

<sup>268</sup> See above, Ch. 3, sections on Diodore and Theodore. The passage corresponds to Brock, *Second Part*, CSCO Syri 224, 156–159. In particular on the relationship between Theodore and Isaac see now Kavvadas, "On the Relations," 245–250, who convincingly, albeit very briefly, argues that Isaac made wide use of Theodore's *Contra defensores peccati originalis*. Of course Isaac knew his works in Syriac; shortly after their composition, indeed, they were translated into Syriac in Edessa.

by his love, by virtue of the demonstration of the power of the kingdom of heavens, which consists in love, through the death of the Son.<sup>269</sup> This is what Isaac states in *Kephala*. 4,78:

The aim of the death of Our Lord was not to redeem us from our sins, nor for any other reason, but exclusively that the world might *become aware of the love of God for creation*. If all this had been aimed solely at the remission of sins, it would have been enough to redeem us in some other way.

This core concept is repeated *ibid.* 14,30.48, but here it is applied to the incarnation of Jesus. Both the incarnation and the horrible death of Jesus are the expression of divine love, and nothing else. This may be an idea of Origen that found its way to Isaac. For Origen thought that Christ's death on the cross is precisely a demonstration of the immensity of the love, *nimia et abundantissima caritas erga nos*, of both Christ and God the Father (*Comm. in Rom.* 4,10,10–13 and 7,7,31–33). Isaac observes that Christ's cross reveals that there is no logic of retribution to motivate it: "What *commensurability* has Christ's coming with the works of the generations before it? Does this infinite compassion seem to you a *retribution* for those evil deeds? If God is one who *punishes* and does this through a *retribution*, which adequate *retribution* do you see here?" (*Second Part* 39,16). This strongly reminds me of what Origen expressed in at least two passages: human beings had done absolutely nothing to deserve the gift of Jesus's life; there is no logic of retribution in this. Even the form of the rhetorical question is identical: "How should humans have deserved something so great from me? What have they done that is worthy [τί ἄξιον πεποιήκασι] of the blood shed by me for their sake?" (*Hom. in Ier.* 14,6).<sup>270</sup>

Indeed, in *Second Part* 40,14 Isaac remarks that if God has arrived to such a degree of condescension as to be willing to be called Father of sinful humanity, this is a sign of exceeding love. Likewise, in *Hom.* 45,B323, God is said never to punish anyone in a retributive manner, but exclusively to emend the sinner and to avert other people from evil. Isaac's conviction that God does not act according to a logic of retributive punishment is clearly in agreement with his conception of a therapeutic function of otherworldly sufferings. Therefore, in his meditation on Gehenna, in his *Second Part*, he

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<sup>269</sup> This passage was studied by I. Hausherr, "Un précurseur de la théorie scotiste sur la fin de l'Incarnation," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 22 (1932) 316–320 = *Id.*, *Études de spiritualité orientale*, OCA 183 (Louvain, 1969), 1–5.

<sup>270</sup> Likewise: *Quid tale dignum facturum sunt homines, pro quibus patior ista, ut pro eis ego patiar haec?* (*Comm. in Matth. Ser.* 135).

clearly envisages a limited duration of otherworldly sufferings (ch. 39): Isaac states that even condemnation to Gehenna includes a mystery, that with which God will transform evilness, the fruit of bad choices of human free will, into a means to accomplish his salvific plan, which remains *unknown* to all rational creatures, especially those who, “humans or demons,” are suffering in Gehenna, “for the whole period that the suffering lasts.” This clearly means that suffering in Gehenna will last for a certain period and will come to an end, both for human beings and even for demons. This is what Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius also thought. Isaac’s subsequent observations in 39,22 are still more revealing: he, just like Origen and Nyssen, bases his argument for the apokatastasis on “what is worthy of God,” “what becomes God”:

If we said or thought that what concerns Gehenna is not in fact full of love and mixed with compassion, this would be an opinion *full of blasphemy and abuse against God our Lord*. If we even say that God will hand us to fire in order to make us suffer, to torment us, and for every kind of evil, we *attribute to the divine nature hostility* toward the rational creatures that God has created by grace, and the same is the case if we affirm that God acts or thinks out of spite, as though he sought vengeance. Among all of his deeds, there is *none that is not entirely dictated by mercy, love, and compassion*. *This is the beginning and the end of God’s attitude toward us.*

Through Gehenna, both sinners and demons will attain salvation. For “we cannot say that God’s *love* for those rational creatures who have become demons due to their demonic deeds diminishes [...] because God’s nature does not nourish a love that depends on events that take place in time” (*Second Part* 40,2). The purifying and saving torments in Gehenna are nothing but the effect of God’s love on sinners: while it produces delight in the righteous, it produces “love torments” in sinners, as these realise that they have sinned against love (*First Part* 27,201–202).

In the history of the Christian doctrine of apokatastasis, Isaac of Nineveh is probably the Patristic author who most insisted on God’s boundless love as the basis for this doctrine; though, he has strong antecedents in Origen and even Clement of Alexandria, who both linked apokatastasis with ἀγάπη, followed by Gregory of Nyssa. The centrality of love was of course also transmitted by Ps. Dionysius, whose work became practically immediately available in Syriac (and indeed its first Syriac version is much earlier than the extant Greek). It is interesting to observe that this line was kept alive far beyond the Patristic age. By way of example, let me briefly recall the French reformed theologian and philosopher Jacques Ellul (1912–1994), who was influenced by Barth. In *What I Believe* (Grand Rapids, 1989) he proposed

an eschatological universalism grounded precisely in God's love. If God is love, and has so loved his creatures as to give his only Child for their sake, he simply cannot damn his own creatures eternally. He cannot reject them, since they belong to him. This would mean God's self-mutilation, which would be absurd.<sup>271</sup>

According to Isaac, demons are rational creatures that have become demons for their evil works, just as it was maintained by Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and Evagrius; they are not a separate nature that is the specific expression of evil. For evil is ontologically non-subsistent. Therefore, the very name "Satan" does not indicate a being that is evil by nature, but rather "the deviation of human free will from the Truth" (*Hom.* 26,B189). Physical death itself, a consequence of sin, is understood by Isaac as a good, because it allows humans to enter the new world: God "decreed death as though it were a punishment for Adam [...] under the appearance of something to be feared, God hid his eternal intention regarding death and the end at which his wisdom aimed: [...] death would be the way to transport us to that splendid and glorious world" (*Second Part* 39,4). This is the same conception of death as a gift from God that is found in the Origenian line, especially in Methodius and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>272</sup> Methodius, who followed Origen in many respects, in *Symp.* 9,2 observes that the cause of death is sin, but God has given physical death to humanity as a providential gift, so "that the human being might not sin forever and might not be liable to an eternity of condemnation." Therefore, the very possibility of an eternal punishment is excluded, thanks to God's providential gift of physical death. A similar idea is found in Ephrem's *Commentary on Genesis* 3,25: 35,1–3, which was known to Isaac and in which Ephrem interprets the exile of Adam and Eve from Eden after their sin, and thence the introduction of physical death, as a sign of God's mercy, in that God wanted to make their suffering only temporary, and not eternal. It is God's providence that decided to give physical death to humanity after the fall, in order to shorten human beings' tribulations in

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<sup>271</sup> Ellul, *What I Believe*, 189–190; See A. Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World: the Life and Thought of Jacques Ellul* (Carlisle, 2002). Ellul cites 1 Cor 15:28 and John 12:32, besides Barth, observing that on the one side we have the consequences of Adam's sin, but on the other the doctrine on Jesus Christ, according to which justice was satisfied by his sacrifice, which makes a second eternal condemnation of individuals useless (Ellul, *What I Believe*, 190). In Christ and thanks to Christ all are predestined to be saved. God leaves everyone free, but not regarding the ultimate decision, whether to be saved or to be lost. For this would contradict the well know principle that the human being proposes but God disposes (*ibid.* 191).

<sup>272</sup> See my "Death."



the present condition of decay and illness.<sup>273</sup> Gregory of Nyssa maintained that death entered the world as a consequence of sin; it was not created by God, as is stated in Wis 1:13, “The Lord did not create death,” and 2:24: “Death entered the world because of the devil’s envy.” Gregory ascribes most of the responsibility for the fall precisely to the devil’s deception, which tends to merge with the deception of the senses. So, he states that the original sin was a wrong judgment due to the deceit of the senses (*Or. cat.* 21,4–5). Sin, however, was also facilitated by a lack of love for God. The “skin tunics” (Gen 3:21) represent the present condition of liability to passions and death, which assimilates humans to irrational animals. The identification of the skin tunics with death is particularly evident in *Or. cat.* 8: after the fall, God takes off from the human being the garments of its original happiness, i.e. immortality, confidence (*parrhēsia*), and *apatheia*, and puts death on it. Since the skin, once it is separated from the animal, is dead, God, in covering humans with skin tunics, covers them with death, which is proper to irrational animals. Gregory emphasises that this garment, i.e. mortality (νεκρώτης), remained something alien and external (ἐξωθεν) to the human being. Precisely because death is fundamentally alien to humanity—since it is not a creature of God and was not included in God’s initial plan—Gregory in *Or. cat.* 26 can explain Christ’s victory over death as extending to the whole of humanity: by means of his own death, Jesus Christ destroyed the power of death in the same way as light dispels darkness. Christ, who is Life, approached death so much as to utterly destroy it, just as fire purifies gold by eliminating what is alien to it.<sup>274</sup>

This interpretation clearly derived from Origen. Unlike Philo and the Valentinians, and contrary to certain accusations levelled against him, Origen did not identify the “skin tunics” with the body tout court.<sup>275</sup> Clement

<sup>273</sup> See T. Buchan, *Blessed Is He Who Has Brought Adam from Sheol* (Piscataway, NJ 2004); I. Ramelli, “La centralità del mistero di Cristo nell’escatologia di s. Efrem,” *Augustinianum* 49,2 (2009) 371–406.

<sup>274</sup> L.F. Mateo-Seco, “La teología de la muerte en la *Oratio catechetica magna* de Gregorio de Nisa,” *Scripta Theologica* 1 (1969) 453–473; I. Ramelli, “La colpa antecedente come ermeneutica del male in sede storico-religiosa e nei testi biblici,” *Ricerche Storico-Bibliche* 19 (2007) 11–64; Eadem, *Gregorio di Nissa sull’anima*; Eadem, “1 Cor 15:24–26: Submission of Enemies and Annihilation of Evil and Death. A Case for a New Translation and a History of Interpretation,” *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 74,2 (2008) 241–258.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. A. Lund-Jacobsen, “Gen 1–3 as Source for the Anthropology of Origen,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008) 213–232. See my “Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah,” 59–78; “Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa,” *The Studia Philonica Annual* 20 (2008) 55–99.

had already warned that such an identification, endorsed by the encratite Cassian, was incorrect (*Strom.* 3,14,95,2), and Origen, in CC 4,40, declared that the skin tunics conceal a mystery that is deeper than that of the fall of the soul according to Plato. Procopius of Gaza (*Comm. in Gen.* PG 87/1,221A)<sup>276</sup> very probably attests to Origen's interpretation of the skin tunics: these are not the body, since the human being in paradise had already a body, fine (λεπτομερές), luminous (αύγοειδές) and immortal, but the mortal and heavy corporeality that was given to the human being after its sin. But after death, at the resurrection, all humans will recover immortality. An important confirmation to Procopius's attestation is provided by his quasi-contemporary Gobar (*ap. Phot. Bibl. cod.* 232,287b–291b), who knew Origen and his admirers very well and often reports his thought. Concerning the skin tunics, he too gives an account of their identification with mortality, heavy corporeality, and liability to passions, which arrived after the fall, but which humans will lose at the resurrection (ὑπερ καὶ ἀποτιθέμεθα ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει, 288a). The key term αύγοειδές is used here, too, which confirms the identity of source with Procopius.

Gregory of Nyssa in *Virg.* 12–13 stresses that the skin tunics are not the body, but “a fleshly mentality.” In *Vit. Moys.* GNO VII/1,39–40, the skin tunics are “the dead and earthly kind of vision.” Thus, they are directly linked to death. And in *Mort.* GNO IX 55–62 Gregory explains, just like Isaac afterwards, that God decreed death for the human being after the fall *as a good*: through the experience of evil, the human being would discover that evil is finite and, since it is foreign to human nature, and is not a creature of God, it cannot endure forever. The resurrected body will take off the skin tunics when it will be transformed at the resurrection, and death and fire have purified it from mortality and passions and all the scoriae of the present life, which are totally extraneous to life in the next world: “The body will be transformed when it is created again at resurrection into something more divine: *death* will have *purified it from all that is useless* and superfluous to the enjoyment of the future life. After purification in fire, it will *take off all that is earthly* and useless, what the experts call scoriae [...] completely useless and alien to the blessedness we hope for.” Now, the very same idea of the deposition of the skin tunics at resurrection was already set forth by Origen.

<sup>276</sup> See K. Metzler, “Auf Spurensuche. Rekonstruktion von Origenes-Fragmenten aus der sogenannten Oktateuchkatene des Prokop von Gaza,” in *Quaerite faciem eius semper. Festschrift A. Dihle*, eds. A.M. Ritter et al. (Hamburg, 2008), 214–228; R. Heine, “The *Testimonia* and Fragments Related to Origen's *Commentary on Genesis*,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 9 (2005) 122–142.

Even the selfsame verb is used by Origen (as I have shown) and by Gregory for this action of “taking off”: ἀποτίθημι. Gregory maintains that death is good, because it destroys all that is superfluous to the next, blessed life: “What happens to iron in fire, when the fusion destroys what is useless, will also happen when all that is *superfluous will be destroyed through dissolution* in death, and our body will be *set right* [κατορθοῦται] by means of death.” Physical death is thus presented in a positive and providential light. For it will free us from all passions and direct our desires to what is really worthy of them.<sup>277</sup> Death is good because it destroys our present body, our “earthly house,” to give us a new house, not made by human hands but by God, for the other world: “It is the purified body that we should love, not the scoriae that have been taken off. For what divine Scripture says is true: after the destruction of our earthly house, then we shall find the building made by God for us, a house not made by human hands, in the next world, in heaven, worthy of being itself the home of God in Spirit.” All the properties of our body will be transformed into something “more divine.” Likewise, also in *An.* 148–149 Gregory foresees the deposition of the skin tunics, dead tunics taken from animals and symbolising death. It is easy to see how these reflections form, albeit indirectly, the background of Isaac’s considerations.

### *John of Dalyatha*

The discourse on the “skin tunics” and their deposition was taken up also by John of Dalyatha (around 690–780), a monk and prior of a monastery in Qardu, whose work was condemned as Messalian<sup>278</sup> at a synod in 786/7 and who followed in the footsteps of Isaac. His works are grouped in letters, homilies, and “centuries,” and were translated into Arabic and Ethiopian. He was influenced by two Antiochene theologians who supported the apokatastasis doctrine, Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, and by

<sup>277</sup> “Scoriae will disappear, those things to which the impulses of our desires are now directed: pleasures, richness, love for glory, power, anger, haughtiness, and the like. Thus, our impulse, once liberated and purified from all this, will turn in its activity only to what is worth desiring and loving: it will not altogether extinguish our natural impulses toward those objects, but will transform them in view of the immaterial participation in the true goods.”

<sup>278</sup> On Messalianism see C. Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart: The Messallian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford, 1991). On the relationship between Syriac mysticism and Messalianism P. Hagman, “St Isaac of Nineveh and the Messalians,” in *Mystik–Metapher–Bild*, Hrsg. M. Tamcke (Göttingen, 2008), 55–66.

Evagrius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ps. Dionysius, who all supported this theory, by Anthony, who also seems to have supported it, by Babai, who commented on Evagrius's *Kephalaia Gnostica*,<sup>279</sup> and by Isaac himself. According to John, the "skin tunics"<sup>280</sup> after the fall replaced the original "garments of light" that were proper to the human being at the beginning and will be recovered at the end, in an eschatological feast of restoration that reminds readers of the feast of apokatastasis depicted by Nyssen at the end of *De anima et resurrectione*.<sup>281</sup> For Isaac, just as for Origen, Nyssen, and many Fathers, the end of the human being is deification,<sup>282</sup> and Christ is the physician of souls (*Ep.* 51,18; cf. 11,1).

John speaks of suffering caused by one's sins (*Ep.* 33,2), and even of separation from God and perdition (*Ep.* 50,16), like Origen, but, again like Origen, he never assumes that all this will be eternal. He identifies Gehenna and the "outer darkness" with passions (4,28), assigns the "terrible place" reserved to sinners to intermediate eschatology (47,10), and claims that sinners will experience God as a dark and mortal ocean, not "eternally," but "in the world to come" (50,12–14). This is a correct translation of Greek αἰών/ῶς. Likewise, he renders the Biblical expression πῦρ αἰώνιον, not as "eternal fire," but as "celestial [*shmynyt'*] fire" (43,22).<sup>283</sup> The "*ʾlm*" [= αἰών] of light" is the world to come, with divine light.<sup>284</sup> In *Ep.* 47,2 he seems to imply that only beatitude will be eternal, not torments. For he states that in this world the good "amass grain for their beatitude in the world without end, the evil amass thorns for their torments."

The otherworldly fire is repeatedly presented by John as purifier, for instance in *Ep.* 10,2; 25,2; 29,2; 43,12; 51,2, and in the prayer that concludes his

<sup>279</sup> *The Letters of John of Dalyatha*, ed. M.T. Hansbury (Piscataway, 2006); I. Ramelli, "Note per un'indagine della mistica siro-orientale dell'VIII secolo," *Ilth* 12 (2007) 147–179. A new edition (after that in PO 39/3, 180 ff.) and a monograph by have been announced. See also B. Colless, *The Wisdom of the Pearlers: An Anthology of Syriac Christian Mysticism* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 2008); N. Khayyat, *Jean de Dalyatha. Les Homélies I–XV*, Sources syriaques 2 (Antélias, 2007), with introduction, text, and French translation.

<sup>280</sup> See S. Brock, "The Robe of Glory," *The Way* 39 (1999) 247–259; my *Prospettive cristiane*, I, in coll. with G. Lettieri–C. Noce (Rome, 2007).

<sup>281</sup> On which see my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*.

<sup>282</sup> See B.E. Colless, "The Mysticism of John Saba," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 39 (1973) 83–102; R. Beulay, *L'enseignement spirituel de Jean de Dalyatha* (Paris, 1990); Y. Moubarac, *La chambre nuptiale du coeur. Approches spirituelles et questionnements de l'Orient Syrien* (Paris, 1993), I 46–61; on deification in Patristics see my "Deification (Theosis)."

<sup>283</sup> On the meaning of Greek αἰώνιος see Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*.

<sup>284</sup> On mystical light in John see R. Beulay, "Forme de lumière et lumière sans forme," in *Mélanges A. Guillaumont* (Genève, 1988), 131–141.

letters, in which he cites Rom 8:35–39, that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God, and from God’s mercy. This is an idea that occurs many times in John, for example also in *Ep.* 31,4, and in the prayer of *Ep.* 42,1, in which he also calls Christ “the ocean of our forgiveness.” John knew Isaac’s idea that the fire of Gehenna is full of God’s mercy and purifying. John identifies this fire, “in which the Creator has purified the creatures,” with Jesus himself (*Ep.* 4,6). This identification is already found in Origen, who identified the purifying fire with God himself. The “unquenchable fire,” John insists, is Christ, who has one die in order to give life (*Ep.* 15,2), another idea that was dear to Origen.<sup>285</sup> Christ’s blood is equally purifying and redeemer (*Ep.* 14,3; 5,3). In *Ep.* 43,4 repentance itself is made to be a purifying fire, which restores the image of God in human beings and has all people pass from death to life (46,5–11).

The theme of God’s love, which, as I have indicated, was central to Isaac’s thought, is also of the highest importance in John’s own soteriological thought. God’s love is ineffable and superabundant (*Ep.* 34); nothing can be compared to it (*Ep.* 47,8). It always leaves the door open, and “has us exit the prison in which we have imprisoned ourselves, *even when we would not want*: may your power prevail over us” (*Ep.* 5,4). I have already pointed out that this idea of God who goes even against our will in order to save us was developed by Cassian as well, another author who had sympathy for Origen’s soteriology.

John also insists on 1Cor 15:28, one of Origen’s and Nyssen’s favourite biblical passages in support of the doctrine of apokatastasis (*Ep.* 46,1; 51,4; cf. 2,6; 11,4). Christ will come out of the bosom of the Father and by means of the sign of resurrection (1 Tess 4:16) will gather those scattered into unity (*Ep.* 40,13). In Origen, Nyssen, and Evagrius the resurrection-restoration is a return to unity. For John, all those who are now separated were created for reconciliation and unity (*Ep.* 40,7). The end will be “the unified place, which unites those divided” (40,6). Help will be supplied to those who are not mature enough for that end and those who are lacking (40,11),<sup>286</sup> since the unifying agent is God’s mercy (*Ep.* 40,2). This will restore the lost unity. Indeed, John proclaims the unity of grace in *Ep.* 13,3, and in 31,2 he

<sup>285</sup> He insisted on it in his *Homilies on Jeremiah*. See my “Origen’s Exegesis of Jeremiah.”

<sup>286</sup> John believed in the power of intercession, as is demonstrated by *Ep.* 41 and 43,26; so he speaks of people saved from demons by other people’s prayers and of the intercession of those who love (1,6), and in 43,25 he explains that repentance itself comes from Christ’s grace; if it does not take place, the others can pray for the sinner, which will produce the latter’s salvation: those who repent do not go to *sheol* (43,18).

quotes John 17:21, Christ's great prayer for unity, which was one of the most important pillars of Origen's conception of apokatastasis as unity.<sup>287</sup> The section of his *Commentary on John* devoted to the great prayer for unity in John 17 is lost, but a fragment on John 17:11 survives from the *Catenae* (fr. 140), in which Origen explains that "Unity has many meanings" (τὸ ἐν πολλαχῶς λέγεται: he was taking up a famous Aristotelian expression, but applying it to a Platonic issue). For instance, it can be a unity according to harmony and agreement, or according to similarity of nature. The unity of all human beings in Adam and in Christ is of the latter kind. In *Comm. in Io.* 1,20,119 Origen develops it by observing that, whereas God the Father is One and absolutely simply One, Christ the Logos is "One through All."<sup>288</sup> Christ is said to be "the first and the last" in Revelation because he is the first, the last, and all that is in between, as Christ-Logos is "all things" (ibid. 1,31,219), "all and in all" (ibid. 1,31,225). The unity of the Logos is emphasised in *Comm. in Io.* 20,6,43–44 against those who "want to kill the Logos and to break it to pieces [...] to destroy the unity of the greatness of the Logos."

The dialectic between unity and multiplicity was an important theme in Origen's thought. Multiplicity is subsumed and transcended in the Logos' unity, and, through Christ-Logos, in the eschatological unity of all rational creatures in God. This "deification" has been often misrepresented as pantheism, as though a substantial confusion should occur between God and creatures. But this is excluded by divine transcendence itself; the "deification" of the *logika* will be their leading a divine life, and their unity in God is for Origen a unity of will. For all rational creatures' will shall be oriented only to the Good, i.e., God, no longer to evil, neither will it be dispersed among minor or apparent goods, but God will be all goods, in one, for all. This eschatological unity will be unity in *agapē*, which is why there will be no more fall from unity in the final apokatastasis: because *caritas numquam cadit* (*Comm. in Rom.* 5,10,158–240). This *agapē* will keep all rational creatures in unity within themselves and with God, because *agapē* is a centripetal force: *Tanta caritatis vis est ut ad se omnia trahat* (ibid. 5,10,226). The first fall, of Satan and Adam, took place before the manifestation of Christ's love, but in the apokatastasis love will be perfect (as the end will be not only similar to, but *better* than, the beginning). The unity of apokatastasis will never be disrupted by one rational creature's free will which could endure forever in

<sup>287</sup> See my "Unity," in *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico*, ed. A. Di Berardino, English edition, forthcoming in Chicago from InterVarsity.

<sup>288</sup> On this, see my "Clement's Notion of the Logos," which also analyses the development of this idea in Origen.

the rejection of God. Origen takes up Paul's revelation that nothing will be able to separate us from God's love, not even death; therefore, a fortiori, not even our free will (ibid. 5,10,212–222).

The fact that each rational creature's free will shall willingly adhere to the Good will also constitute the main feature of the final unity. The current multiplicity of rational creatures' wills and conditions will be subsumed and transcended in the eventual unity. The unity-multiplicity dialectic is clear in the following statement: *sicut multorum unus finis, ita ab uno initio multae differentiae ac varietates, quae rursum per bonitatem Dei, per subiectionem Christi atque unitatem Spiritus sancti in unum finem, qui sit initio similis, revocantur* (Princ.1,6,2). That for Origen the final unity is a unity of will is also demonstrated by his statement that the cause of the multiplicity and diversity of the present state of things is precisely rational creatures' free will, which is now oriented in different directions, and has been so since the fall, before which there was *unitas* and *concordia* (Princ. 2,1,1): the initial unity was a concord in which all *logika* wanted the same thing, but it was lost with the fall, when they began to wish something else than the Good, and dispersed in a multiplicity of volitions. Likewise, the final unity will be a unity of will. In Princ. 1,6,2, the universality of the submission to Christ in Phil 2:10 is stressed, as well as the dialectic between the multiplicity of all creatures (*omnes, omnis universitas*) and the unity of the *telos* (*unum finem*); cf. ibid. 1,6,4: *dispersio illa unius principii atque divisio ad unum et eundem finem et similitudinem reparatur*. It is precisely the unity of the end that induces Origen to assume that not even demons will be left outside (1,6,3: *ab illa etiam finali unitate ac convenientia discrepabit*).

The theme of human beings "scattered" in death/perdition and brought to unity by, and in, Christ-Logos was emphasised by Origen also in connection with the motif of Jesus's gathering into unity the scattered children of God, which repeatedly appears in his *Commentary on John*, where the theme of unity through Christ, especially based on John 17:21, is essential. In 28,21,185 Origen joins these two motifs. The eschatological reconstitution of Christ's body is connected to the interpretation of 1 Cor 15:28 and the equation between universal submission to Christ and God in the end and universal salvation.

Gregory Nyssen, another of the main inspirers of John of Dalyatha, took up this whole set of ideas in *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*.<sup>289</sup> In *In Illud* 23, too,

<sup>289</sup> As I have argued in "In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius ... (1 Cor 15,27–28): Gregory of Nyssa's

Gregory argues in the same way, moreover introducing, like Origen, the key concept of *love* in apokatastasis: if the Father loves the Son, according to John 17:23, and all humans are in the Son, again as multiplicity subsumed in unity, then the Father loves all humans as the Son's body, and the Son's submission to the Father means that all humanity will "attain the knowledge of God and be saved" (cf. 1Tim 2:4–6). Nyssen depends on the notion of Christ-Logos being the unity of all human beings when in *In Illud* 21 he states that the elimination of death will have as a consequence that all will be in life, because all will be in Christ, who is "Life itself" (John 11:25), and Christ's body will be constituted by all humankind. Similarly, Origen argued that in the end all will be in life, because eternal life, Christ, excludes eternal death altogether (*Comm. in Rom.* 5,7), since they are incompatible with one another; thus, one must be eliminated, and 1Cor 15:25–28 reveals that this will be death.

According to Gregory, Christ is the Mediator in that he unifies all to himself and to the Father, in a function of unification of multiplicity (*In Illud* 21,10–16; cf. Origen, *Princ.* 2,6,1; *CC* 3,34). Christ unifies all human beings in himself and unites them to the Father through himself, i.e., through his subsuming them in unity in his body. Consistently with the notion of Christ-Logos as unity of multiplicity, in *In Illud* 22–23 Gregory insists on Christ's prayer for unity in John 17:20–23. He observes that Christ "unifies all" in himself and to the Father; all become "one and the same thing" with Christ and God who are one; Christ, being in the Father, by joining us to himself in unity accomplishes the union of all humans with God. Christ's prayer for unity in John 17:20–23 was one of Origen's favourite biblical quotations in support of the idea of perfect unity in apokatastasis, which, in his view, will be the accomplishment of the subsumption of all multiplicity in a superior unity, for instance in *Princ.* 1,6,2 (*restituatur in illam unitatem quam promittit Dominus ...*) and 2,3,5: *Quod dicit Salvator [...] 'Sicut ego et tu unum sumus, ut et isti in nobis unum sint' ostendere videatur [...] id cum iam non in saeculo sunt omnia, sed omnia et in omnibus Deus*. All beings will be God through deification. In *Princ.* 3,6,1, Origen expresses the same idea against the background of the eschatological passage from "image of God" to "likeness to God" and from likeness to "unity" in God. The unity of all will depend on the fact that all will eventually be in God and God will be "all in all" (cf. *ibid.* 3,2,4; 3,6,6, in which unity is again emphasised).

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Exegesis, its Derivations from Origen, and Early Patristic Interpretations Related to Origen's," in *Studia Patristica* XLIV, eds. J. Baun–A. Cameron–M. Edwards–M. Vinzent (Leuven, 2010), 259–274.



Not only his conception of unity, but also John's theology of the image is very close to that of Origen and Nyssen, who used it to support their doctrine of apokatastasis. The divinity will regenerate the *logika* into the likeness of its glory; the image, indeed, will be changed into the likeness of God's glory. Isaac of Ninveh declared blessed that soul which is aware of being a mirror of God (7,2) and presents the acquisition of the likeness to the archetype as tantamount to deification (*Ep.* 36,3; 29,1), of which he speaks also in *Ep.* 13,1. In *Ep.* 49,9, John treats of the contemplation of God's Providence, which, just as in Evagrius, follows the contemplation of the Judgment. The intellect, looking at itself, sees "the totality of humanity as an image of God, in whom it was created. In this contemplation *there is neither just nor sinner, neither slave nor free, neither Hebrew nor gentile, but Christ appears fully in everyone.* In the world to come, all rational beings will be without those differences" (*Ep.* 51,11) and receive nourishment from God's bosom.

The fact that *ruḥa*, "Spirit," in Syriac is feminine surely favoured a conception of God that included prominent feminine traits.<sup>290</sup> On the other hand, already Clement of Alexandria ascribed maternal characteristics to God, such as a womb, breasts, and milk, precisely in reference to divine mercy and love.<sup>291</sup> Clement himself, however, may not have been impermeable to Syriac culture, given that one of his teachers was "a Syrian" whom he met in the East before meeting Pantaenus in Alexandria, as he affirms in *Strom.* 1.1.11.2, and given the probable contacts between Clement, Origen, and Bardaisan.<sup>292</sup> The notion of God's feminine and even maternal side, which was particularly present in the Syriac tradition, could not but favour the doctrine of apokatastasis itself, and John of Dalyatha was the heir of a long tradition of supporters of this doctrine, among both Greek and Syriac Fathers.

*Joseph Hazzaya, Moses Bar Kephā*

The above-mentioned *Ep.* 49 in John of Dalyatha's collection may be ascribable to Joseph Hazzaya (born in 710/13), a monk and a mystic who was deeply

<sup>290</sup> See S.A. Harvey, "Feminine Imagery for the Divine," *St Vladimir Theological Quarterly* 37 (1993) 111–139; S. Brock, *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy* (Aldershot, 2006), Ch. VI: "'Come, Compassionate Mother ... Come Holy Spirit': A Forgotten Aspect of Early Eastern Christian Imagery" (article stemming from 1991). Cf. *Ep.* 28,2.

<sup>291</sup> These are illustrated by A. van den Hoek, "God Beyond Knowing: Clement of Alexandria and Discourse on God," in *God in Early Christian Thought. Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson*, eds. A.B. McGowan–B.E. Daley–T.J. Gaden (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 37–60.

<sup>292</sup> See my "Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation," *Harvard Theological Review* 102 (2009) 135–168.

influenced by Origen and Evagrius<sup>293</sup> and whose works were condemned at a synod in 786/7 together with those of John of Dalyatha himself. If this attribution of *Ep.* 49 were right, this would suggest that Joseph, too, was inclined to the doctrine of apokatastasis.

The theory of apokatastasis remained widespread in the Syriac world, especially thanks to Evagrian influence,<sup>294</sup> and in particular among the so-called “Miaphysites.” It even seems to appear, albeit briefly, in Moses Bar Kepha (813–903), a Miaphysite monk and bishop who, among else, has preserved important information on Bardaisan’s cosmology.<sup>295</sup> Many works are ascribed to him: commentaries on Biblical books, one specifically on the *Hexaëmeron*, a commentary on Aristotle’s dialectics, a treatise on free will and predestination, one on the soul, a history of the Church, a commentary on Gregory Nazianzen’s works, and other writings. In his treatise *On Paradise*, in three parts, dedicated to his friend Ignatius and translated into Latin by the Flemish humanist Andreas Masius (Antwerp, 1569), Moses speaks of the renewal or restoration (ܠܚܝܬܐ) of the world performed by Jesus.<sup>296</sup> Masius rendered, not “restoration,” but “joy,” which translates a similar Syriac word: this alteration, due either to Masius himself or to the Syriac manuscript he had at his disposal, reveals the intention of obscuring any idea connected with the apokatastasis doctrine.

*Shift to the West but on Greek Patristic Grounds:  
John the Scot Eriugena and Apokatastasis as Reditus*

*Per inhumanationem Filii Dei omnis creatura, in caelo et in terra, salva facta est.*

(Eriugena, *Periphyseon* 5,24)

From the Syriac ninth century I shall now turn to the Latin West, approximately in the same period. John the Scot Eriugena<sup>297</sup> (†877) supported the

<sup>293</sup> See A. Guillaumont, “Sources de la doctrine de Joseph Hazzaya,” in *L’Orient Syrien* 3 (1958) 3–24; E.J. Sherry, “The Life and Works of Joseph Hazzaya,” in *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of T.J. Meek*, ed. W.S. McCullough (Toronto, 1964), 78–91.

<sup>294</sup> See above all Guillaumont, *Les Kephalaia Gnostica d’Évagre*.

<sup>295</sup> See my *Bardaisan of Edessa*, 323–331.

<sup>296</sup> This treatise is included in a thirteenth-century ms. (Yale, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 17). See Leo Depuydt, “Classical Syriac Manuscripts at Yale University: A Checklist,” *Hugoye* 9,2 (2006) §§ 1–30. Other mss. containing it are later.

<sup>297</sup> He is called “John Eriugena” at the beginning of his translation of Dionysius the

theory of apokatastasis especially in his *Periphyseon*, a work in which he developed the most systematic form of Christian Neoplatonism in the Latin West before Meister Eckhart.<sup>298</sup> After Boethius, he brought Greek Platonism back to the Latin West and offered a synthesis of Greek and Latin Christian Platonism. The *Periphyseon* was condemned much later, at the Sens council (1225) under pope Honorius III, and subsequently again by Gregory XIII (1585), and when in 1681 it was rediscovered at Oxford, it was listed in the Index of Forbidden Books. All this mainly because of the pantheism (Books 1–3)<sup>299</sup> and apokatastasis doctrine (Books 4–5)<sup>300</sup> that were perceived in it, in addition to the influence of the controversy about the universalist Amaury de Bène (†1207 ca.) on the Sens council.<sup>301</sup> Eriugena's masterpiece

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Areopagite: *incipiunt libri sancti Dionysii Areopagitae, quos Ioannes Eriugena transtulit*. The oldest known ms. of his work also attests to his denomination *Eriugena*.

<sup>298</sup> See W. Beierwaltes, "Eriugena's Platonism," *Hermathena* 149 (1990) 53–72.

<sup>299</sup> Book 3 explains creation as the self-manifestation of God and discusses the nature of created effects and the meaning of *creatio ex nihilo*. The term *nihil* has two meanings: it can mean *nihil per privationem* or *nihil per excellentiam*. The lowest level in the hierarchy of being, unformed matter, is *prope nihil*, "almost nothing," or "nothing through privation." But God is non-being through the excellence of His nature which transcends everything else. Since there is nothing outside God, *creatio ex nihilo* cannot mean creation from some principle outside God, but it means creation out of God's superabundant nothingness.

<sup>300</sup> Eriugena's original intention, expressed in Book 3, 619D–620B, was to devote one book to each of the four divisions; thus Book 1 deals with the divine nature and the procession or *exitus* of all things from God, Book 2 treats the Primordial Causes and Book 3 their Created Effects, including the nature of *ex nihilo* creation and the stages of the creation of the world. The topic of creation requires Eriugena to address issues connected with the Biblical account of creation, and thus, in Book 3, he embarks on his own version of a *Hexaëmeron*. The momentous event of the emergence of human nature on the Sixth Day of creation requires extended treatment, and Eriugena is forced to devote a fourth book to this topic, and to introduce a fifth book to deal with the *reditus* of all beings to God. Thus Eriugena was compelled to depart from his original plan of four books—exactly as those of Origen's *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*—and add a fifth. This change of plan helps scholars to identify different stages in the composition of the text.

<sup>301</sup> Amaury taught logic and theology at the University of Paris and in 1206 the church forced him to revise his positions (cf. N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* [London 1970, 21991], 152–156). These must have been felt as dangerous, if Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, which had not been considered to be heretical so far, was condemned in 1225 due to its influence on Amaury (ibid. 152–153), who had also been condemned by the Lateran council in 1215 (cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, eds. F.L. Cross–E.A. Livingstone [Oxford, 1983<sup>2</sup>], 48). Amaury and his followers seem to have maintained that all things are one, because all is God, too pantheistic a view. Like Gioacchino da Fiore, they proclaimed that the ages of the Father and the Son had passed, and that of the Spirit had come, incarnated in the true believers, who would bring all of humanity to perfection. Incarnation itself would become universal (Cohn, *The Pursuit*<sup>2</sup>, 155). Some ideas of Amaury and his followers will survive in the movement of the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit (XIII–XV centuries, cf. G. Leff,

exerted a remarkable influence over later Christian philosophers all the same; Eckhart and especially Nicholas of Cusa were heavily affected by his Christian Neoplatonism.

John the Scot's sources and favourite authors<sup>302</sup> are telling in relation to his penchant for apokatastasis. He knew Gregory of Nyssa's works and translated his *De hominis opificio*, in which the doctrine of apokatastasis emerged; his Latin version is known under the title *De imagine*, which is also the title with which John regularly indicates Gregory's work.<sup>303</sup> It seems notable to me that in the only manuscript in which it is preserved (Bamberg B. IV. 13, discovered by M. Cappuyns) the only chapter that was dropped at some point in the manuscript tradition—while it was certainly translated by John the Scot, as is proved by an anthology in which it is preserved, albeit not without textual corruptions<sup>304</sup>—is precisely a chapter containing a clear reference to the doctrine of apokatastasis: *Sancti Gregorii episcopi Niseni* [sic]. *Peracta quidem hominum genitura eius quae termino conterminari tempus, et sic omnium adunari, et humanum a corruptibili ac terreno ad impassibile et sempiternum, hoc mihi videtur. Beatus apostolus* [sc. Paul] *considerans predicare, per epistolam ad Corintheos* [sic], *propter repentium temporis statum, et iterum in unum futuram moventium resolutionem ...* I suspect this did not fall out of the manuscript tradition accidentally.

Likewise, John was acquainted with Maximus the Confessor, who probably was another supporter of the apokatastasis doctrine,<sup>305</sup> and whose *Ambigua* he translated, and Ps. Dionysius, who is likely to have had a penchant for the apokatastasis doctrine as well, and on whose work Eriugena

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*Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, vol. 1 [Manchester–New York, 1967], Ch. 4; Cohn, *The Pursuit*<sup>2</sup>, 152–186). In their view, it seems, since God is all and in all already now, then evil, sin and the consequences of sin do not really exist. Thus, all are already saved. However, the ideas of this movement were not uniform; sometimes the notion emerges that all will be absorbed in an eschatological but impersonal union. At least some of them deemed purgatory and hell mere psychic states (cf. Cohn, *The Pursuit*<sup>2</sup>, 172–173; Leff, *Heresy*, 374) and considered themselves to be in direct communion with God, rejecting not only the church's but even Christ's mediation.

<sup>302</sup> See my essay on Eriugena in my *Tutti i commenti a Marziano Capella: Scoto Eriugena, Remigio di Auxerre, Bernardo Silvestre e anonimi*, essays, improved editions, translations, commentaries, appendixes, bibliography (Milan, 2006).

<sup>303</sup> Ed. M. Cappuyns, "Le *De imagine* de Grégoire de Nysse traduit par Jean Scot Erigène," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 32 (1965) 205–262.

<sup>304</sup> Ms. Vat. Reg. 195 (IX–X cent.) which includes as an excerpt, at fols. 61<sup>v</sup>–62<sup>r</sup>, the chapter missing from the Bamberg codex, namely the chapter that in Eriugena's translation fell between Chs. 22 and 23. It corresponds to Ch. 22 in Gregory's *De hominis opificio*.

<sup>305</sup> See above in this same chapter, section on Maximus the Confessor.

commented.<sup>306</sup> Drawing on him, Eriugena in his *Periphyseon* offered a meontology that Dermot Moran<sup>307</sup> has rightly defined “the most detailed analysis of non-being since Plato’s *Sophist* and *Parmenides*.” Indeed, practically all of Eriugena’s Patristic sources are Platonic authors who were deeply influenced by Origen: Ambrose, the Cappadocians, Maximus, and Ps. Dionysius. That the Cappadocians and Maximus heavily depended on Origen does not even need to be argued. Origen’s influence upon Ambrose is also known, and Gregory’s influence on Ambrose is recognised by Eriugena himself, who states that Ambrose was “of the highest authority” and often followed “the greatest Greek theologians, especially Gregory,” meaning Gregory of Nyssa (*Per.* 4,816A–817a). As for Ps. Dionysius, I have already mentioned that István Perczel has argued that the *Corpus Dionysianum* should be ascribed to fifth-century Origenism, with an Evagrian influence,<sup>308</sup> and I have already pointed out that Origen is one of its main sources.

Even more important, Eriugena directly knew the work of Origen himself. Petroff<sup>309</sup> thinks that Origen was known to Eriugena through Augustine; I think that Eriugena could read at least Rufinus’s version of Origen’s Περὶ ἀρχῶν, which he even quotes extensively, besides absorbing his thought through his faithful follower Gregory of Nyssa and, more loosely, through Maximus and Ps. Dionysius. This supposition of a direct reading of Origen stems from several elements, first of all from quotations—as I shall show—and from the comparison of the overall structure of Origen’s and Eriugena’s philosophical masterpieces. Indeed, the configuration itself of John the Scot’s *Periphyseon*,<sup>310</sup> which “convoglia all’interno di un’organica

<sup>306</sup> *Expositiones in Hierarchiam coelestem*, ed. J. Barbet, CCCM 31 (Turnhout, 1975).

<sup>307</sup> D. Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena. A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1989), XIII–XIV.

<sup>308</sup> “Pseudo Dionysius and Palestinian Origenism,” in *The Sabaite Heritage in the Orthodox Church*, ed. J. Patrich (Louvain: Peeters, 2001), 261–282; “Une théologie de lumière,” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 45 (1999), pp. 79–120.

<sup>309</sup> “*Theoriae* of the Return,” 516–527.

<sup>310</sup> Iohannis Scotti seu Eriugena *Periphyseon*, curavit Eduardus A. Jeauneau, 9. ed. a suppositiis quidem additamentis purgatam, ditatam uero appendice in qua uicissitudines operis synoptice exhibentur, CCCM 161–165 (Turnhout, 1996–2003), reviewed by D.C. Greetham, “Édouard Jeauneau’s edition of the *Periphyseon* in light of contemporary editorial theory,” *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79 (2005) 527–548. All quotations from *Periphyseon* come from this edition (this is also why I adopt the edition’s uniform rendering of *v* and *u* in Latin as *u*); when there are parallel redactions available in synoptic columns, I usually employ the *versio IV*, but if it differs substantially from other redactions (*versio II*, *versio V*) I indicate it. All translations, as always in this book unless differently stated, are mine.

sistemazione di indagini mentali la complessa pensabilità di tutto ciò che è vero in quanto deriva dalla universale causalità divina,<sup>311</sup> closely corresponds to that of Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν, the only monumental synthesis of Christian philosophy prior to it and, in fact, comparable to it.<sup>312</sup> Both works are a Christian systematisation of all that is knowable and thinkable. Eriugena's title, moreover, is Greek, although his treatise is in Latin.<sup>313</sup> Both works begin with a treatment of God as universal cause. Furthermore, the argumentative methodology in Περὶ ἀρχῶν and *Periphyseon* is the same: in both works, philosophical demonstrations are always inseparable from the support of biblical and Patristic quotations. Again, the tension of the whole *Periphyseon* toward eschatology—the work is formally a philosophical treatment of the hexaëmeral creation, followed by the eschatological seventh day of rest—is modelled on Origen's thought, all oriented toward the *telos*, in which everything has its perfection.<sup>314</sup> Moreover, Origen's "zetetic" method, which is at its best in his masterpiece and was highlighted already by Pamphilus and Athanasius, as I have shown, reappears in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, not only for its heuristic scheme, magnified by the dialogue between the *Nutritor* and the *Alumnus*, but also for the continual re-elaborations performed by the author himself. The result is that *Periphyseon* is, in Édouard Jeuneau's words, "a text in perpetual becoming." This is definitely clear thanks to Jeuneau's own edition, which has distinguished several notably differing versions by the author himself.<sup>315</sup> Exactly like Origen, Eriugena relies both on scriptural (and Patristic) authority and on rational

<sup>311</sup> G. D'Onofrio, "Giovanni Scoto Eriugena," in *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, ed. V. Melchiorre (Milan 2006), 4810.

<sup>312</sup> Winrich Löhr has rightly noticed that after Origen "the more ambitious project of coherently interpreting Christianity as a philosophy had, in effect, been abandoned" ("Christianity and Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives of an Ancient Intellectual Project," *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 [2010] 160–188, *praes.* 187). This project was resumed, I think, only centuries later, by Eriugena.

<sup>313</sup> That the title itself, *Periphyseon*, is directly modelled upon that of Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν was rightly argued by R. Crouse, "Origen in the Philosophical Tradition of the Latin West: St. Augustine and John Scottus Eriugena," in *Origeniana V*, ed. R.J. Daly (Leuven, 1992), 565–569.

<sup>314</sup> This is well shown by P. Tzamalikos, *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology* (Leiden, 2007); see my review in *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* 99 (2007) 177–181.

<sup>315</sup> É. Jeuneau–P. Dutton, *The Autograph of Eriugena* (Turnhout, 1996), demonstrated that the first hand of the revisions (i 1) is probably Eriugena's. The second (i 2) is not his hand, but it intervened in the text of *Periphyseon* as well. Jeuneau's five-volume edition has much clarified the text by returning the marginal notes (original, but nevertheless notes) to the margins.

investigation and clarification; not only does he use this method, but he expressly refers to it in a number of places, for instance *Periph.* 5,938B: *Haec omnia probabili auctoritate et ratione subnixa esse arbitror.*

Also, it is probable that Eriugena conceived his work at first as a four-book work, which then expanded into a work over five books.<sup>316</sup> Now, Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν was precisely in four books. I have argued elsewhere that Eriugena was directly inspired by Origen's philosophical masterpiece.<sup>317</sup> It is not accidental, I find, that Eriugena chose a Greek title for his *Periphyseon*, even if it is a Latin work. The title, moreover, closely resembles that of Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν. And it is even less accidental that, among all of his Patristic quotations, Eriugena cites in Greek, and not with a Latin title or paraphrase, the title of Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν: *Audi magnum Origenem [...] in tertio libro Περὶ ἀρχῶν* (*Periph.* 5,929A). Another proof that the very structure of Origen's Περὶ ἀρχῶν inspired Eriugena for his own *Periphyseon* seems to me to lie in the insertion of a treatment of scriptural exegesis, and more specifically scriptural allegoresis, in the last book of his work (*Periph.* 5,1008C ff.), followed by examples of biblical interpretations, exactly as Origen devoted a part of the last book of his Περὶ ἀρχῶν to a treatment of scriptural allegorical exegesis equipped with specific examples of biblical interpretation. Moreover, within this same treatment of Scriptural exegesis, in 1010BD Eriugena inserts a prayer to Christ-Logos, that he may assist him in his exegetical efforts. This prayer strongly reminds me of those of Origen as an exegete. What is more, Eriugena's *Periphyseon* is concluded by a long *Anacephaleosis*<sup>318</sup> (*Periph.* 5,1019A ff.) in which Eriugena gives a detailed summary of all that he has expounded in the whole work. In this case, too, he seems to have followed Origen closely, who concluded his Περὶ ἀρχῶν with a long and complex recapitulation (*Princ.* 4,4) that in Rufinus's version is entitled precisely *Anacephaleosis*.

That Eriugena directly read Origen is also proved by the abundance of correspondences in their respective thought, by Eriugena's direct quotations of Origen's masterpiece (see below), and, besides, is supported by strong philological evidence. As Cappuyns<sup>319</sup> pointed out, Wulfald, the friend of John to whom the *Periphyseon* was dedicated, possessed at least six works

<sup>316</sup> See above, n. 300.

<sup>317</sup> In "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009) 217–263.

<sup>318</sup> This is the very title it assumes in all extant versions, *versio II* as attested to by both cod. A and codices H M, *versio IV* and *versio V*.

<sup>319</sup> M. Cappuyns, "Les bibli Wulfaldi et Jean Scot Érigène," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 13 (1966) 38.

by Origen in his library, which are listed in the catalogue of his books. Likewise, Contreni<sup>320</sup> has shown that the library of the school of Laon, at which Eriugena also taught, included several works by Origen. The closeness of Eriugena's thought to Origen's, indeed, is such that his homily on the Johannine Prologue, the *incipit* of which is *Vox spiritualis aquilae*, was long mistaken for a work of Origen's and transmitted in many manuscripts and cited by many authors under Origen's name,<sup>321</sup> for instance by Thomas Aquinas, *STh* 1 q. 42, 2, 4, who also in his *Catena* quotes passages from this homily introducing them with the formula, *Origenes in Homilia*. The confusion was certainly facilitated by the existence of Origen's monumental *Commentary on John*. Moreover, Eriugena's admiration for Origen is transparent in several passages. He speaks of him as "St. Origen," *beatus Origenes* (*Periph.* 5,922C),<sup>322</sup> "the most sublime" or "the greatest interpreter of the holy Scripture, I mean Origen" (*Periph.* 4,818B),<sup>323</sup> and "the great Origen, most careful and laborious investigator of reality" (*Periph.* 5,929A).<sup>324</sup> Origen's "zetetic" method did not escape Eriugena, who, I think, drew inspiration from him also in this respect. Precisely because he appreciated Origen's zetetic method and followed it, Eriugena ironically ascribed certainty (*sine dubio, omnino, incunctanter* and the like) to those thinkers whose theses he rejects.<sup>325</sup> He despises those who have no doubts—in his view, an indication of superficiality—and appreciates Origen's investigation and dialectic method, which he appropriates in his own *Periphyseon*.

<sup>320</sup> J. Contreni, "The Cathedral School of Laon from 850 to 930," *Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik* 29 (1978) 115 ff. and 128 ff. See also W. Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena* (Leiden, 1991), 153.

<sup>321</sup> Edition *Homélie sur le Prologue de Jean, Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* par É. Jeaneau, Sources Chrétiennes 151 (Paris, 1969); a critical edition is also provided in Giovanni Scoto, *Il prologo di Giovanni*, ed. M. Cristiani (Milan, 1989).

<sup>322</sup> How striking and daring this definition was in Eriugena's day is made clear by a Carolingian gloss to *Periph.* 5,922C, to the words *beatum Origenem*, in the margin of ms. J, fol. 135<sup>v</sup>; the anonymous glossator notes: *nota nusquam orthodoxorum uocatur* [sc. Origen] *cum tali* EIITACI: "Note that Origen is never called with such an epithet [i.e., 'saint'] in any work of orthodox theologians!"

<sup>323</sup> *Nouimus autem summum sanctae scripturae expositorem, Origenem dico.*

<sup>324</sup> *Audi magnum Origenem, diligentissimum rerum inquisitorem.*

<sup>325</sup> For instance, he uses *incunctanter* in *Periph.* 5,995BC for Augustine's wrong statement about the bodily age of the resurrected (all of them would be about thirty years old); *omnino* for Epiphanius's wrong assertion of the sense-perceptible nature of Eden in *Periph.* 4,818C, and *non dubitat* for Epiphanius's wrong identification of the "skin tunics" with garments of sheep skins (ibid.).



Eriugena's *De praedestinatione* (850–851)<sup>326</sup> resulted from his intervention in the controversy over predestination,<sup>327</sup> to which he was invited to contribute, qua expert in the liberal arts, by Hincmarus of Reims, on Pardulus of Laon's advice. They needed a brilliant philosopher able to reject, by means of the theory of language and rational argument, the doctrine of "double predestination," defended by the monk Gothescalcus on the basis of the expression *gemina praedestinatio* found in Isidore of Seville. Eriugena observed that *praedestinatio* in this syntagm is singular and therefore designates one and the same divine will, which becomes double (*gemina*) in that it has two effects: it predestines some to blessedness and others to damnation *ab aeterno*. This doctrine obviously denied both God's goodness and human freewill, and, just as Origen refuted such a denial in Gnosticism, Eriugena too refuted it in the "heretics" of his day.

The very argumentative method of John the Scot in his work on predestination is similar to Origen's: dialectics or rational argument, the doctrines of the Fathers (in Origen, of Scripture), and a learned synthesis of disciplines. Indeed, Eriugena boldly claims that the incapacity for sound argument in matter of predestination also depends on ignorance of the liberal arts and *Graecae litterae* (I shall adduce an example later: he ascribes a theological error of Augustine's to his ignorance of Greek). Eriugena, for his part, was well acquainted both with Greek language and with works on the liberal arts such as those by Boethius and Martianus Capella, which he also commented on,<sup>328</sup> and throughout his commentary on Martianus—especially in the first two books—he exalts the role of the liberal arts in the process of knowledge. For him, the *studium rationis* is the substance of the liberal arts and of philosophy, φιλοσοφία, which is the search for wisdom.<sup>329</sup> Such is the status of the *studium rationis* for Eriugena that it is always accompanied by virtue and leads to the deification of humans.<sup>330</sup> Perfection in knowledge

<sup>326</sup> E. Mainoldi, ed., *Giovanni Scoto Eriugena, De praedestinatione liber: dialettica e teologia all'apogeo della rinascenza carolingia*, ed., tr., comm. (Tavarnuzze, 2003); G. D'Onofrio, *Fons Scientiae. La dialettica nell'Occidente tardo-antico* (Naples, 1986), 277–320.

<sup>327</sup> I limit myself to referring to D. Ganz, "The Debate on Predestination," in *Charles the Bald. Court and Kingdom*, eds. M. Gibson–J. Nelson (Oxford, 1981), 283–302; G. D'Onofrio, "Discussioni teologiche nel regno di Carlo il Calvo," in *Storia della teologia nel Medioevo*, I (Casale, 1996), 197–242.

<sup>328</sup> See my *Tutti i commenti a Marziano* and "Eriugena's Commentary on Martianus in the Framework of his Thought and the Philosophical Debate of his Time," in *Carolingian Scholarship and Martianus Capella*, ed. S. O'Sullivan–M. Teeuwen, CELAMA 12 (Turnhout, 2012), 245–272.

<sup>329</sup> *Adn. in Marc.* 17,7, p. 135 Ramelli.

<sup>330</sup> *Rationis studium a virtute neque virtus a rationis studio segregari potest, quippe sibi invicem connexim semper adiunguntur* (*Adn. in Marc.* 17,5, p. 135 Ramelli).

parallels perfection in virtue, both reached through philosophy, and leads to deification, the Platonic Fathers' θέωσις: *Nemo intrat in caelum nisi per philosophiam* (*Adn. in Marc.* 57,15, p. 207 Ramelli). From Eriugena's viewpoint, just as from that of the Greek Fathers who inspired him, there is no difference between philosophy and theology. It is precisely at the beginning of his *De praedestinatione* (1,1) that he puts forward his famous statement, *Veram esse philosophiam veram religionem, conversimque veram religionem esse veram philosophiam*.

Eriugena's anti-predestinationistic argument in *De praedestinatione* is grounded in God's simplicity, which unites prescience and predestination in God (1,4), and in the ontological non-subsistence of evil (3,2–3; 7 and 9)—one of the main metaphysical pillars of the doctrine of apokatastasis in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, and probably also Ps. Dionysius and Maximus—which makes evil unknowable to God. Eriugena refutes the doctrine of predestination of Augustine, who, because of his polemic against Pelagianism, thought that after the fall the human being has even lost its capacity to do good, and in *Corr. et grat.* 14,44 interpreted 1 Tim 2:4 (“God wants all humans to be saved”) in a very partial sense, in reference to those predestined to salvation: *Ita dictum est, “Omnes homines vult salvos fieri,” ut intelligatur omnes praedestinati*. Augustine's line was taken up, against Eriugena, by Prudentius of Troyes toward the end of the year 851 in his *De praedestinatione adversus Johannem Scotum cognomento Erigenam*, in which his polemic against Eriugena is meaningfully joined with that against *Origenis amentia* (1011A). In 1323CD as well, Prudentius accuses Eriugena of Origenism. The charge levelled by Prudentius against Origen is one of the most widespread against him: the denial of the resurrection of “the flesh”.<sup>331</sup> *Tu autem in Origenis scita concedis, qui multipliciter de resurrectione disserens, resurrectionem, glorificationemque corporum multoties ingeminat, carnis vero vel omnino negat, vel subdole vocabulo corporis palliat*.

In this work Eriugena also reflected on the nature of sufferings in hell, which he, like Origen, declared to be not a physical torment, but the awareness of one's sins. This is reported by Prudentius and Incmarus. The former in 1338C also assimilates Eriugena's view to Origen's: *Ignes autem aeternos quos intelligere solet Origenes, puto quod te non fugiat, conscientiam videlicet peccatorum, et poenitudinem interna coris urentem*. Likewise Incmarus in *Praed.* 297A attests to Eriugena's spiritual view of tortures in hell: *Non aliae poenae sint infernales, nisi tormentalis memoria conscientiae peccatorum*.

<sup>331</sup> See my *Dialogue of Adamantius*.

More generally, spiritual and allegorical exegesis is a feature that Eriugena shared with Origen, with whose theorisation of allegory in Book 4 of *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* he was well acquainted (I have already argued that he even emulated it in the last book of his own *Periphyseon*). For instance, Eriugena, in his commentary on Ps. Dionysius's *Caelestis Hierarchia*, speaks of *mysteria* and *sacramenta*, which pertain to the domain of allegory, and of *symbola*, which he defined as *allegoriae dicti et non facti*. These are allegorical interpretations of a text that has no literal meaning, because it speaks of something that has never happened, as in Psalm 113, in which it is stated that mountains and hills have jumped. Eriugena is clearly drawing on Origen's notion that a few biblical passages cannot be interpreted literally, since on the literal plane they are illogical or impossible, but only in an allegorical sense.<sup>332</sup>

Eriugena's main argument in his *De praedestinatione* is the unity of God's will, which destines and calls every creature to the Good. Chapter 19 marks the conclusion of the whole work and envisages both the punishment of the evil will and a glorious universal restoration. This is well understandable, since Origen and Gregory of Nyssa are the only sources of Eriugena's eschatology, in addition to being his main sources on anthropology. Meyendorff highlighted that "in St. Gregory of Nyssa, Eriugena found what today we call 'theocentric anthropology,'" and Sheldon Williams noted the influence of Eriugena's translation of Gregory Nyssen's *De hominis opificio* on his anthropological thought: "The *De imagine* [...] contributes largely to Eriugena's anthropology, which in essence derives from St Augustine, and to which Pseudo-Dionysius has no contribution to make."<sup>333</sup>

I add that in Gregory's *De hominis opificio*—which is the only work by Nyssen explicitly cited by Eriugena, but probably not the only one known to him<sup>334</sup>—Eriugena also found clear traces of an eschatology that was oriented to apokatastasis. Gregory's "theology of the image" is both in his and in Eriugena's thought a potent pillar to buttress the doctrine of apokatastasis. Eriugena insists, like Origen and Gregory, that the image of God in the

<sup>332</sup> See my "Origen and the Stoic Allegorical Tradition"; "The Philosophical Stance of Allegory"; and P. Dronke, "Les conceptions de l'allégorie chez Jean Scot Érigène et Hildegard de Bingen," in *Allégorie des poètes, allégorie des philosophes. Études sur la poétique et l'herméneutique de l'allégorie de l'Antiquité à la Réforme*, eds. G. Dahan-R. Goulet (Paris, 2005), 231–244.

<sup>333</sup> J. Meyendorff, "Remarks on Eastern Patristic Thought in John Scottus Eriugena," in *Eriugena. East and West*, eds. B. McGinn–W. Otten (Notre Dame, IN, 1994), 55, 65.

<sup>334</sup> I suspect that Eriugena was also acquainted at least with Gregory's *De anima et resurrectione*, many reminiscences of which I could detect in his *Periphyseon*. I shall mention some in the course of the present exposition.

human being lies in knowledge and free will (*Praed.* 4,5). This is why, according to him, the knowledge of God as the creator of the human being is joined to the knowledge of human dignity (*Adn. in Marc.* 8,4, p. 110 Ramelli). The selfsame association, again in relation to the exercise of reason, is found in *Adn. in Marc.* 8,1, p. 110 Ramelli.<sup>335</sup> human dignity derives from the fact that the human being is in the image and likeness of God, which, according to Eriugena, just as to Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, consists in free will and intelligence—it is no accident that in *Periph.* 4,12,799A Eriugena ascribes to Nyssen the notion that the human being made in the image of God is its intelligence, as are the faculties related to it.<sup>336</sup> This, indeed, distinguishes humans from animals and allows the soul to elevate itself beyond a brutish state, thanks to the exercise of the *logos*, which passes through the liberal arts and philosophy (*Adn. in Marc.* 17,8, p. 135 Ramelli).<sup>337</sup>

Differently from Augustine, in Chapter 4 of *De praedestinatione* Eriugena argues that free will was not impaired by the fall, in that it belongs to human nature *qua talis*, and is inalienable in that it is a gift from God *ex bonitate*. What has diminished after the fall is only the power of free will, which was bestowed upon the human being *ex largitate*. Human free will, God's gift, is not the cause of human sins, which should rather be sought in “the perverse movement of the rational substance that makes use of its free will in a wrong way” (5,5–6). This movement, for Eriugena just as for Origen and Nyssen, tends to nothingness, which is “the bottom of evil” (18,9). God predestines no one to damnation, but only to eternal salvation (11); for evil and the relevant punishment do not subsist ontologically (15,1); therefore, they cannot be foreseen and predestined. Since evil is an ontological negation, the suffering

<sup>335</sup> *Virtus quippe, recognitione originis suae, qua ad imaginem et similitudinem creatoris sui condita est, seu liberi arbitrii notitia, quo velut maximo dono et nobilitatis suae indicio prae ceteris [sic] animalibus ditata est, rationabili naturae ex divinis thesauris concessa est atque donata. In qua virtute dico velut in quodam speculo clarissimo lumine reidentem dignitatem naturae suae et primordiale fontem humana anima [...] perspicit [...] ex sapientiae studiis et donis virtus, recognitione originis suae et libertatis notitia humanae distribuitur naturae.*

<sup>336</sup> *Praefati itaque magni theologi [sc. Nysseni] verba [...] nihil aliud videntur suadere quam ut hominem intelligamus solo animo et virtutibus ei naturaliter insitis ad imaginem Dei factum; insunt autem ei sapientia, scientia, ratiocinandi virtus, ceteraeque virtutes quibus ornatur anima similitudinem in se Creatoris sui exprimens; et quod omnes homines semel et simul facti sunt in illo uno homine de quo scriptum est: “Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram.”* See also B. Stock, “The Philosophical Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena,” *Studi Medievali* (1967) 1–57.

<sup>337</sup> *Pulchre admodumque honeste humanam animam ratiocinandi legibus carentem veluti quondam feram stulta hispiditate incultam, nullisque sapientiae doctrinis domitam atque frenatam asserit esse, ac per hoc quicquid honestatis in anima rationali elucet non aliunde nisi rationis exercitationibus comparatur.*

of otherworldly punishment (*poenalis miseria*)<sup>338</sup> will be the absence of beatitude (16,1) and, as Nyssen also taught in *De anima*, will have no physical place. What is punished is not one's ontological nature, but one's sinning will (16,3).

Again like Gregory in *De anima*, Eriugena in Chapter 17 argues that God does not inflict any punishment; sinners are tormented by their own iniquity (17,2.5.7); the same divine fire includes the just, who find beatitude in it, and the wicked, who find punishment there (17,8). God, who has created neither sin nor death, is not the author of any punishment either, which is rather caused by sin itself (18,5). God has instead created the substantial nature of sinners and righteous people alike, and he never abandons it, whereas he rejects sin, of which he is not the creator. According to Eriugena, just as according to Origen, the substantial nature of sinners will never be annihilated; this is why God has established a limit to evilness in every sinner, to avoid that this may grow *in infinitum* (18,5.7.10). In the epilogue, Eriugena insists that God does not predestine anyone to damnation and, what is more, does not even allow that the impious perish. No substantial nature, indeed, can perish, or even "be punished and be in misery [*miseria*]" (16,1). Punishment will afflict the evil will, but all natures will enjoy "a wonderful joy" (19,3). This is an anticipation of the theory that will be expounded at more length in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, as I shall show.<sup>339</sup>

<sup>338</sup> Cf. *aeterna miseria* in 19,4. What underlies *aeterna* is here αἰώνιος, which, as I have pointed out many times, does not mean "eternal" proper, and was tranquilly used by Origen and by Gregory of Nyssa in reference to the otherworldly punishment.

<sup>339</sup> On Eriugena's eschatology I limit myself to referring to *History and Eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and His Time. Proceedings of the 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, Maynooth-Dublin, August 16–20 2000* eds. J. Mc Evoy–M. Dunne (Leuven, 2002); here especially A. Bisogno, "Essentia, voluntas et scientia: esiti escatologici della gnoseologia del *De Praedestinatione liber*," 277–296; R. Crouse, "Predestination, Human Freedom, and the Augustinian Theology of History in Eriugena's *De divina praedestinatione*," 303–311; P.A. Dietrich–D.F. Duclow, "Hell and Damnation in Eriugena," 347–366; V. Petroff, "Theoriae of the Return in John Scottus' Eschatology," 527–579; See also T. Gregory, "L'escatologia di Giovanni Scoto," *Studi Medievali* 16 (1975), 497–535; É. Jeaneau, "Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor in the Works of John Scottus Eriugena," in *Carolingian Essays*, ed. U.R. Blumenthal (Washington, 1983), 138–149, who points out the importance of Maximus and remarks that even the Ps. Dionysius known by Eriugena "was a Dionysius revised and corrected by Maximus" (148); A. Wohlman, *L'homme, le monde sensible et le péché dans la philosophie de Jean Scot Érigène* (Paris, 1987); G.L. Potestà, "Ordine ed eresia nella controversia sulla predestinazione," in *Giovanni Scoto nel suo tempo. L'organizzazione del sapere in età carolingia, Atti del XXIV Convegno Storico Internazionale, Todi 1987*, edd. C. Leonardi–E. Menestò (Spoleto, 1989), 383–411; D. Moran, "Eriugena," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [<http://plato.stanford.edu>] 2004.

The torment itself of evil wills is called by Eriugena an *occultissima operatio* (2,5) that is, a mysterious operation of God's providence, since thanks to it the final *reditus* of sinners to God will take place. Even demons will be reintegrated into the perfect totality in the end, when creation will coincide again with its eternal model, the product of God's creative knowledge, in which all realities subsist from eternity. All creatures will experience the aforementioned *reditus*,<sup>340</sup> which, in its universality, is to be considered a universal apokatastasis. Sinners will not be deprived either of their ontological subsistence or of happiness, which they will preserve in their nature and memory (16,1): only their evil will shall suffer and be destroyed. They will remember the happiness that is related to the Good, and will want to reach it, since there is no rational creature who does not want to escape misery and attain happiness (15,10).

That they will attain it completely, and that the universal apokatastasis envisaged by Eriugena in fact coincides with universal salvation, becomes clear if to the thesis defended in *De praedestinatione* one adds a core passage from *Periphyseon* (5,931A), in which Eriugena makes it clear that, while the substance of sinners, created by God, will live eternally, the evilness (*malitia*) derived from their perverted will shall perish in the other world and not remain eternally.<sup>341</sup> This is perfectly consistent with Origen's, Nyssen's, and Evagrius's idea of a complete vanishing of evil in the end. Eriugena thinks that the sinners' evilness will be annihilated and what will remain of these sinners will be their substance restored into God in the end and their will shall be finally free from evilness, by means of a suffering that is God's *occultissima operatio*. This set of ideas clearly points to the final reintegration of sinners.

What is more, as will be soon clear, Eriugena integrates apokatastasis and ἐπιστροφή or *reditus*, the third ontological movement according to the Neoplatonists after *μὴν* (*manentia*) and *πρόδος* (*processio*). This is an integration that, as I have argued,<sup>342</sup> was already performed by Ps. Dionysius, whose work Eriugena knew very well. In his translation of Ps. Dionysius,

<sup>340</sup> On Eriugena's idea of *reditus* or *reversio* see K. Ruh, *Storia della mistica occidentale*, I (Milan, 1995), 225–238; W. Otten, "The Dialectic of the Return in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*," *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991) 399–421. The strong structure that makes *reditus* necessary is underlined by S. Gersh, "Structure, Sign, and Ontology from Johannes Scottus Eriugena to Anselm of Canterbury," in *Reading Plato, Tracing Plato. From Ancient Commentary to Medieval Reception* (Aldershot, 2005), Essay XIII, 125–126.

<sup>341</sup> *In ipsis substantia a Deo facta semper permansura, malitia uero peruersa illorum uoluntate reperta in aeternum peritura.*

<sup>342</sup> See above in this same chapter, section on Ps. Dionysius.

Eriugena rendered ἐπιστροφή with *conuersio*, the same word with which the Vetus Latina rendered ἀποστροφή in Gen 3:16, in which Eriugena reads, not at all an injunction concerning women's or wives' submission, but (on the basis of Philo's and Origen's equation Adam = *animus*, Eve = *sensus*) a prediction of the eventual, glorious apokatastasis: *in hoc loco naturalis ordinis humanae naturae restitutio diuina uoce promittitur et in antiquum status conditionis reuersio [...]* “et ad uirum tuum conuersio tua”: quibus uerbis apertissime intelligitur reditus humanae naturae in pristinum ordinem (*Periph.* 4,855B–856B).

In Book 5 of his *Periphyseon*, the one that is the most closely concerned with the eventual apokatastasis, Eriugena blames those who want to interpret the eschatological prophecies concerning the end of the world in an entirely allegorical way,<sup>343</sup> because, according to Dronke,<sup>344</sup> Eriugena wanted to propose a literal interpretation of the destruction of the world in the service of a universal apokatastasis theory. He proposes this as a more convincing hermeneutic of the texts: “this final flame, which will fill and devour the whole world, is probably the manifestation of the Logos of God in every creature, when nothing else than the intelligible light will shine forth in all, good and wicked.”<sup>345</sup>

The great movement that Eriugena depicts in his *Periphyseon* is analogous to that delineated by Origen in his Περὶ ἀρχῶν<sup>346</sup> and elsewhere: from the initial unity to the present multiplicity, division, and dispersion—essentially due to the fact that free wills do not converge any longer on the Good, but are dispersed in a multiplicity of volitions directed toward minor and apparent goods, which are in fact evil—and from this situation of multiplicity back to unity in the *telos*. This return to unity—which is treated essentially in Book 5, devoted to the return of every creature to “the Nature that is not created and does not create”—is configured as a universal restoration. In his masterpiece Eriugena explains that restoration passes through the human being, from whom the reunification of every creature to God will start. This recovery of unity will begin with the elimination of the distinction

<sup>343</sup> *Allegoricum solummodo sensum [...]* ad solius allegoriae leges recurrunt (996A; cfr. 990C).

<sup>344</sup> Cf. Dronke, “Les conceptions,” 232.

<sup>345</sup> 997D. See also Stock, “The Philosophical Anthropology.”

<sup>346</sup> E.g., *sicut multorum unus finis, ita ab uno initio multae differentiae ac varietates, quae rursum per bonitatem Dei, per subiectionem Christi atque unitatem Spiritus sancti in unum finem, qui sit initio similis, revocantur* (*Princ.* 1,6,2). For the initial and final unity as a unity of will see my “Origen and Apokatastasis: A Reassessment.”

between man and woman, which was introduced because of sin—so that, instead of an “angelic” and even “divine” way of multiplication, the human being was reduced to a “bestial” way of propagation—and which is abolished in Christ (Gal 3:28). This distinction will be eliminated “when human nature will be restored to its original condition” (*in pristinum restaurabitur statum*), an idea that obviously owes much to Origen and Gregory Nyssen.<sup>347</sup> Even the expression *restauratio in pristinum statum*, which corresponds to ἡ εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκατάστασις, is typical of Origen and Gregory.<sup>348</sup> The very idea that human nature is one and originally undivided, and that the primary human being, “in the image of God,” is neither male nor female, is a tenet of Origen’s and Nyssen’s anthropology (see, e.g., Greg. Nyss. *De opif.* 16), which in turn depended on Philo on this score, and Eriugena insists on it in many passages. It is only the secondary, moulded human being that was divided by God in two genders, in prevision of its sin, but this division will not endure in the end.<sup>349</sup> After the reunification of the two human

<sup>347</sup> *Periph.* 2,6: *substantiarum adunatio ab homine debuit incohare [...] incipiet ergo ab homine naturarum adunatio, per Saluatoris gratiam, in quo, ut ait Apostolus, non est masculus neque femina, quando humana natura in pristinum restaurabitur statum. Nam si primus homo non peccaret, naturae suae partitionem in duplicem sexum non pateretur [...] Homo namque solummodo esset in simplicitate suae naturae creatus, eoque modo, qui sancti angeli multiplicati sunt, intellectualibus numeris multiplicatus. Sed reatu suae praeuocationis obrutus, naturae suae diuisionem in masculum et feminam est passus. Et quoniam ille diuinum modum multiplicationis suae obseruare noluit, in pecorinam corruptibilemque ex masculino et femina numerositatem [...] redactus est.*

See also *Periph.* 4,15: *Quam deificam diuinamque et immaterialem natiuitatem intelligibilem et occultorum dumtaxat bonorum deserens primus homo, prae-honorificando quod secundum sensum et delectabile est et manifestum, merito ex corporibus inordinatam et materialem et corruptibilem habere damnatus est natiuitatem, digne Deo iudicante, peiora melioribus uoluntarie praeponentem in passibilem et seruilem et coangustatam secundum similitudinem in terra irrationabilium brutorumque iumentorum generationem libera et impassibili et spontanea et casta alienari natiuitate, et pro ipso cum Deo diuino et ineffabili honore, cum insipientibus iumentis ignobilem recipere copulationem.*

<sup>348</sup> See my “Matt 17:11: ‘Elijah Will Come, and All Beings Will Be Restored’. Philological, Linguistic, Syntactical and Exegetical Arguments for a New Interpretation,” *Maia* 61 (2009) 107–127.

<sup>349</sup> *Periph.* 4,16: *Duas hominis conditiones [...] unam quidem ad imaginem Dei, in qua nec masculus nec femina intelligitur, sed sola uniuersalis et simplex humanitas, simillimaque angelicae naturae, quam omni sexu omnino carere et auctoritas incunctanter et uera docet ratio: alteram uero atque secundam propter praescitum rationabilis naturae delictum superadditam, in qua sexus constituitur. Merito ergo, quod propter peccatum adiectum est, extra paradisum ac ueluti in inferiori loco factam fuisse de terra plasmationis narratur.*

See also *Periph.* 5,20: *In Christo enim Jesu neque masculus est neque femina, sed solum uerum et totum hominem, corpus dico et animam et intellectum, absque ullo sexu uel aliqua comprehensibili forma, quoniam haec tria in ipso unum sunt, et Deo facta, sine proprietatum*



genders, earth and paradise too—which were divided by sin—will be unified again.<sup>350</sup> All this will happen thanks to Christ, who unified man and woman and earth and heaven with his resurrection, given that he rose, not as a man or a woman, but as a human being: *Primo igitur Dominum Iesum diuisionem naturae, id est masculum et feminam, in seipso adunasse edocet. Non enim in sexu corporeo, sed in homine tantum surrexit ex mortuis: in ipso enim nec masculus nec femina est [...]* *deinde post resurrectionem orbem terrarum paradiso in seipso copulauit* (*Periph.* 2,10). The whole of humanity, in body and spirit, will be one with Christ, in whom the unification of natures takes place, the *adunatio naturarum in Christo*.<sup>351</sup> Eriugena comments on the Genesis narrative of the creation of the human being in *Periph.* 4,5 ff.: in that it joins the animal and the intellectual natures, the human being subsumes the whole of creation in itself and keeps its ontological integrity, created by God, and manifested in the *telos*,<sup>352</sup> although animal passions are a consequence of sin and were added to the human being from outside, an idea that was already well present in Gregory of Nyssa. Passions produce a deformation of the image of God, which, for Eriugena just as for Gregory Nyssen, does not consist in human body, but in human intellect (*Periph.* 4,12), and which can never be cancelled completely. In *Periph.* 4,7 the human being is defined *notio quaedam intellectualis in mente diuina aeternaliter facta*, and its restoration or apokatastasis to its original integrity is announced (*ad pristinam integritatem restitatur*).<sup>353</sup>

The logic that underlies this restoration is explained in Books 4 and 5 of *Periphyseon*. After the sin there came procreation, nutrition, corporeal

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*transmutatione uel confusione. Totus namque Deus est, et totus homo, una substantia* [sc. ὑπόστασις] *uel, ut usitatius dicam, una persona, locali et temporali motu carens, dum sit super omnia loca et tempora Deus et homo.*

<sup>350</sup> Ibid. 2,8: *et quoniam post adunationem hominis, hoc est, duplicis sexus in pristinam naturae unitatem, in qua neque masculus neque femina, sed simpliciter homo erat, confestim orbis terrarum adunatio in Paradisum sequetur.*

<sup>351</sup> *Periph.* 2,11–12. In the same way Eriugena, commenting on the Prologue of John (1,21,298A), observes that the Logos, by becoming flesh, caused the human flesh to become God, thus reconstituting the bond, broken by sin, between the perfection of divine nature and the corruption of that of creatures. In *Periphyseon*, too, Eriugena foresees the *deificatio* of human nature, which corresponds to several Greek Fathers' θεώσις. See my "Deification/Theosis."

<sup>352</sup> *Periph.* 4,6: *Omne siquidem, quod in ea conditor suus primordialiter creauit, totum integrumque manet, adhuc tamen latet, reuelationem filiorum Dei expectans.*

<sup>353</sup> *Omnium uera cognitio humanae naturae insita est, quamuis adhuc inesse ei lateat seipsam, donec ad pristinam integritatem restitatur, in qua magnitudinem et pulchritudinem imaginis in se conditae purissime intellectura est.* For the gnoseological framework of this assertion see my "Eriugena's Commentary on Martianus," 245–272.

growth, hostility of the environment (4,14), but, since the human being was created for life in Paradise and not for death on earth (5,2), it will return to life, in accord with the restoration of all things into unity with God. This is indicated by natural processes such as the cyclical return of the planets (that which was indeed called ἀποκατάστασις in Greek, and which Evagrius and Ps. Dionysius used as a metaphor of the eventual apokatastasis<sup>354</sup>) and of the seasons (5,2.5). The death of the body is the death of death (5,7) and the beginning of apokatastasis, of which in *Periph.* 5,8,876AB Eriugena describes the stages: the first is the dissolution of the body and its return to the four elements; the second will be the resurrection of this same body; the third, its transformation into a spiritual body; the fourth, the return of the whole human nature to its primordial causes in God, that is, God's Ideas; the fifth, the return of the whole nature, together with its primordial causes (the Ideas), to God, so that God will be "all in all."<sup>355</sup> This is the *telos* described according to 1 Cor 15:28, the favourite passage of Origen and Nyssen in support of apokatastasis.

In this connection, from the methodological point of view, it is particularly important to notice Eriugena's shift between the notion of the resurrection as a fact of grace alone and that of the resurrection as a fact of both nature and grace (*Periph.* 5,902CD): *resurrectio corporum naturali uirtute cooperatrice sit futura et non per solam incarnati Uerbi gratiam [...] ex causarum naturalium effectiua potentia, diuinae uoluntati subdita, ipsam resurrectionem dico futuram [...] ipsa quidem natura et gratia resurrectio perficitur*. The disciple explains that he has changed his mind, just as his teacher has, because he has realised that divine miracles always occur by means of natural causes at the service of God. Indeed, for Eriugena it was pivotal to introduce the agency of natural causes in the resurrection in order to be able to extend rational investigation to it as well. Otherwise it would have been impossible for him to include this point in his *Periphyseon*, which is devoted to the rational investigation of what is revealed by faith. In the very same way, his main inspirer, Origen, in his philosophical masterpiece

<sup>354</sup> See above, chapters on Evagrius and Ps. Dionysius.

<sup>355</sup> *Prima igitur humanae naturae reuersio est, quando corpus soluitur et in quattuor elementa sensibilis mundi, ex quibus compositum est, reuocatur. Secunda in resurrectione impletur, quando unusquisque suum proprium corpus ex communione quattuor elementorum recipiet. Tertia, quando corpus in spiritum mutabitur. Quarta, quando spiritus et, ut apertius dicam, tota hominis natura in primordiales causas reuertetur, quae sunt semper et incommutabiliter in Deo. Quinta, quando ipsa natura cum suis causis mouebitur in Deum, sicut aer mouetur in lucem. Erit enim Deus omnia in omnibus, quando nihil erit nisi solus Deus.*

which was very well known to Eriugena, after listing the doctrines that are fixed by revelation, declares that he intends to apply to these, and especially to Scripture, the philosophical research:

We shall see whether what the Greek philosophers call “incorporeal” is to be found in Scriptures under another name. It will be necessary to *investigate* how God should be considered: whether corporeal [...] or having a different nature [...] it will be necessary to *extend the same investigation* also to Christ and the Holy Spirit, and to the soul and every rational nature [...] to order the *rational explanation of all these arguments* into a unity [...] with *clear and irrefutable demonstrations* [...] to construct a consistent work, with *arguments and enunciations*, both those found in the Sacred Scripture and those thence deduced by means of a *research made with exactitude and logical rigour*.

(*Princ.* 1 praef. 9–10)

The very same methodology is presented again by Origen in the last book of the same work: he has investigated in his work *mundi huius visibilis ratio* in order to reveal the rationale of Christian faith, *pro his qui in fide nostra etiam credendi rationem perquirere solent* (*Princ.* 4.4.5). With his masterpiece Origen offered the first Christian philosophical interpretation and explanation of Biblical revelation.<sup>356</sup>

The reduction of substances to their Ideas, which are their primordial causes, is not surprising, first of all given the priority of these causes in both the ontological and the gnoseological order, and then also because of the structural correspondence between the ontological and the logical plane, which is declared at length by Eriugena in *Periphyseon*, e.g. in 2,8 and 4,7.<sup>357</sup> The exercise of *dialectica* leads to the truth because this discipline itself was not invented by humans, but was created by God, the author of all the liberal arts (4,4).<sup>358</sup> Not only God, but also human intellect, which is in the image of God, thanks to the germs of the liberal arts that are embedded in it, becomes creative: human nature, which is “that in which everything was found [*inerat*],” becomes “that in which everything was created [*condita est*].”<sup>359</sup> The abstractive process of knowledge itself is creative, and the

<sup>356</sup> See my “Origen, Patristic Philosophy.”

<sup>357</sup> *Intellectus enim rerum ueraciter ipsae res sunt, dicente sancto Dionysio: “Cognitio eorum quae sunt, ea quae sunt est” [...] cognitio intellectualis animae praecedit omnia quae cognoscit et omnia quae praecognoscit, ut in diuino intellectu omnia causaliter, in humana vero cognitione effectualiter subsistant.*

<sup>358</sup> Διαλεκτική [...] *non ab humanis machinationibus sit facta, sed in natura rerum, ab auctore omnium artium, quae uere artes sunt, condita.*

<sup>359</sup> *Periph.* 4.807A; cf. *Hom. in Joh.* 19.294AD. See *Periphyseon Liber Quartus*, ed. É. Jeaneau (Turnhout, 2000), viii–xxiv.

disciplines, eternal and innate in human intellect, come to be actualised by the exercise of knowing. As the intelligent disciple says, the objects of knowledge are “in a way *created in me*.”<sup>360</sup> Thus, the final *reditus*, with the return of all things to their causes and of these to God, is in fact the same process that human mind accomplishes.<sup>361</sup> For, according to Eriugena, human reason, both discursive *ratio* and intuitive *intellectus*, in line with a fundamentally Platonic distinction, is capable of returning to the universal cause of all realities, that is, God, in its knowing process, in which the real agent of knowledge is again God (*nam si inuenitur [Deus], non ipse qui quaerit [homo], sed Ipse qui quaeritur [Deus], inuenit*).<sup>362</sup> This gnoseological return indeed parallels the ontological return of all things to God,<sup>363</sup> in accord with the Neoplatonic moments of *μονή*, *προόδος*, and *ἐπιστροφή*.<sup>364</sup> If the human being plays a central role in this universal return or *reditus*, it is because the intelligible world is daringly identified by Eriugena, not only with Christ-Logos, but with the human being itself, in that it is in the image of God.<sup>365</sup> For what is in the image of God in the human being is the intellectual soul, and not the soul's inferior faculties or the body, and since the human intellect reflects God's intellect, it also coincides with the intelligible world, that is, all the Ideas of

<sup>360</sup> For, “when I imprint their phantasms in my memory, and when I treat these things within myself, *I divide, I compare*, and, as it were, *I collect* them into a certain unity, I perceive a certain knowledge of the things which are external to me *being created within me*” (*Periph.* 4,765C, version v).

<sup>361</sup> On Eriugena's conception of truth as a process see D. Ansorge, *Johannes Scottus Eriugena: Wahrheit als Prozess: eine theologische Interpretation von 'Periphyseon'* (Innsbruck–Wien, 1996).

<sup>362</sup> This idea seems to be drawn from Origen: *quotiens ergo in corde nostro aliquid quod de divinis dogmatibus et sensibus quaeritur, absque monitoribus invenimus, totiens oscula nobis data esse ab sponso Dei Verbo credamus. Ubi vero quaerentes aliquid de divinis sensibus invenire non possumus, tunc affectu orationis huius assumpto petamus a Deo visitationem Verbi eius* (*Comm. in Cant.* 1,1,14).

<sup>363</sup> All realities “emanate from one font of οὐσία and into it they return again in a circular movement, by nature,” *Periph.* 1.494B.

<sup>364</sup> É. Jeaneau, “The Neoplatonic Themes of *Processio* and *Reditus* in Eriugena,” *Dionysius* 15 (1991) 3–29; D. Puxley, “The Role of the Human in the Procession and Return of the Cosmos from Plotinus to Eriugena,” *Dionysius* 24 (2006), 175–208.

<sup>365</sup> That the intelligible world is the human being, in the image and likeness of God, is affirmed by Eriugena in his commentary on John: *Non credendum est mundum istum, id est universitatem quae constat ex caelo et terra, Patrem delexisse. Ille enim non propter seipsum, sed propter superiorem mundum factus est. Mundum igitur superiorem, quem ad imaginem et similitudinem suam condidit, id est humanam naturam, Pater dilexit ita ut Filium suum pro eo traderet [...] ideo homo 'cosmos' uocatur quoniam ornatus est ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei quae, uel solum uel maxime, in anima intelligetur, non mundus. Et quae creatura tam ornata est quam ea quae ad imaginem creatoris condita?* (230–231 Jeaneau).

all realities as subsisting in God's intellect or Logos: Christ. Indeed, according to Eriugena, the body of the Logos is not only the whole of humanity, but also—as in Origen—the world itself, and Scripture, in that both are the “body of Christ,” as Eriugena explains in his Commentary on John (154–155 Jeaneau).<sup>366</sup> The discipline of *dialectica*, which reflects human thought, at the same time indicates the very metaphysical structure of reality, with its *processio* from the unity of the divine cause<sup>367</sup> to multiplicity and then its *reditus* back to unity.<sup>368</sup> The presence of all Ideas as primordial exemplary causes (*paradigmata*) in the Logos, who proceeded to the creation of substances—according to a notion that was already developed by Origen, Nyssen, and Maximus the Confessor—was expressed by Eriugena in his homily on the Johannine Prologue as well (esp. 7–10): all realities, even the inanimate, “live in the Logos” (10). In the same work he also speaks of the “restoration” and “deification” of the human nature by grace (13).

That all creatures must return to their primordial, exemplary causes, and thus experience apokatastasis, is also the consequence of Eriugena's denial that any creature of God may ever be reduced to nothing. This is something that Origen himself had firmly denied, especially in reference to the devil. Eriugena's declaration in this sense is found in Book 5, where he has to comment upon Mark 13:31, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my *logoi* will not pass away,” *Caelum et terra transibunt, uerba autem*

<sup>366</sup> *Potest etiam per calciamentum Christi uisibilis creatura et sancta scriptura significari [...]* *Habitus quippe Uerbi est creatura uisibilis, quae eum aperte praedicat, pulchritudinem suam nobis manifestans. Habitus quoque eius facta est diuina scriptura, quae eius mysteria continet [...]* *Duo pedes Uerbi sunt, quorum unus est naturalis ratio uisibilis creaturae, alter spiritalis intellectus diuinae scripturae. Unus tegitur sensibilis mundi sensibilibus formis, alter diuinorum apicum, hoc est scripturarum, superficie. Duobus quippe modis diuinae legis expositores incarnationem Dei Uerbi insinuant. Quorum unus est, qui eius incarnationem ex uirgine, qua in unitatem substantiae humanam naturam sibi copulauit, edocet. Alter est, qui ipsum Uerbum quasi incarnatum, hoc est, incrassatum litteris rerumque visibilium formis et ordinibus asserit.* See also W. Otten, “Anthropology between Imago mundi and Imago Dei: The Place of Johannes Scottus Eriugena in the Tradition of Christian Thought,” in *Studia Patristica* (Leuven, 2006), 459–472.

<sup>367</sup> Of course Eriugena is profoundly influenced by Ps. Dionysius, who conceived of God as α τριᾰδικῇ ἐνᾰς (DN p. 116,7). Ps. Dionysius, in turn, was influenced by Origen in his definition of God as μονᾰς καὶ ἐνᾰς, as I have shown. On the conception of unity and trinity in God according to both Eriugena and Ps. Dionysius I refer readers to W. Beierwaltes, “Unity and Trinity in Dionysius and Eriugena,” *Hermathena* 157 (1994) 1–20, who also points out Proclus's influence upon Ps. Dionysius's conception of unity.

<sup>368</sup> On Eriugena's concept of *dialectica* see W. Beierwaltes, “Negati affirmatio,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 83 (1976) 237–265; idem, “Sprache und Sache,” *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 38 (1984) 523–543; idem, ed., *Begriff und Metapher: Sprachform des Denkens bei Eriugena* (Heidelberg, 1990).

*mea non transient*. Eriugena definitely rejects the interpretation that heaven and earth, God's creation, will be reduced to nothing (*Sed quorsum caelum et terra transibunt? Numquid in nihilum?—Absit [...] Nihilum autem nunc dico absentiam et priuationem omnium que sunt et quae non sunt, in quod nulla creatura et uisibilis et inuisibilis occasura sit*); rather, he maintains that heaven and earth will return to their primordial causes (*Periph.* 5,887BC). In 5,886C–887A Eriugena has just stated that this world's matter is made of qualities and to these it must return: *de qualitatibus substantiarum [...] hunc mundum fabricatum compactumque fuisse et in easdem resoluendum fore. Ex incorporalibus enim et intelligibilibus corporalia et sensibilia originem ducunt*. This notion that matter is the result of a concourse of qualities, which are intelligible, comes directly from Gregory of Nyssa, who bridged in this way the ontological gap between God, who is intelligible, and material creation. This notion emerges in his *De hominis opificio* and *Apologia in Hexaëmeron*,<sup>369</sup> and Eriugena translated Nyssen's *De hominis opificio* into Latin, as I have mentioned. Now, in *Periph.* 5,887AC John the Scot explains that the primordial causes to which all things must return are the *logoi* of all things that dwell in God's Logos and contain all substances and their properties:

NUTRITOR: Causas dicimus generalissimas omnium rerum simul *rationes in Verbo Dei constitutas*, substantias uero singulas et specialissimas singularum et specialissimarum rerum proprietates et rationes in ipsis causis distributas et constitutas.

ALUMNUS: Aperte ac breuiter est discretum. Ex ipsis itaque causis et substantiis mundus iste, coagulatis uidelicet illarum qualitatibus, processerat, et *in easdem* iterum suae resolutionis tempore *reuersurus* et transiturus erit [...] non aliorum, ut censeo, nisi in ea ex quibus processerunt. Processerunt autem ex causis generalissimis et specialissimis substantiis per compactas in materiam *qualitates*, addita forma. *In easdem* igitur incunctanter transibunt.

Sed quae sunt illa *uerba Ueritatis* quae numquam transibunt, nosse uelim.

The “words of the Truth,” or “words of the Word” who is Christ (again with reference to Mark 13:31) are the very same *logoi* of all things that dwell in God's Logos, as the Teacher-Nutritor explains soon after, in 887CD: these *uerba Uerbi* (the *logoi* of the Logos!) are indeed the *incommutabiles rerum rationes in Sapientia Dei*, in that *in Verbo Dei unigenito ueluti quaedam*

<sup>369</sup> See C. Arruzza, “La matière immatérielle chez Grégoire de Nysse,” *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 54 (2007) 215–223; partially also Eadem, *Les mésaventures de la théodicée: Plotin, Origène, Grégoire de Nysse* (Turnhout, 2011) with my review in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* Dec. 2012 [BMCR 2012.12.31].

*uerba ineffabilia et incommutabilia perpetualiter manent.* Again, Wisdom and Logos are the first *epinoiai* of Christ, and the Logos contains in itself the *logoi* of all things. This Middle Platonic notion, also thanks to Philo, had entered Christian thought with Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and was still found in Maximus the Confessor.<sup>370</sup>

Another important question arises in this connection, whose importance was already perceived by Origen, and it is notable that Eriugena answers this question in 888A in the very same way as Origen did. The question is whether these *logoi* of all things are to be considered as creatures (*in numero computas creaturarum*). The teacher replies that he does not include these *logoi* among God's creatures:

NUTRITOR: *Non computo* [sc. in numero creaturarum]. Nec sine ratione, quoniam proprie creaturae uocabulo significantur quae per generationem motu quodam *temporales* in species proprias siue uisibiles siue inuisibiles profluunt. Quod autem *ante omnia tempora et loca* substitutum est, quoniam ultra tempora et loca est, *creatura proprie non dicitur*, quamuis modo quodam loquendi sinecdochicôs uniuersalitas quae post Deum est ab ipso condita creatura uocetur.

That the *logoi* existed *ab aeterno*, before all times and places, in God's Logos/Wisdom, before being created as substances, was already declared by Origen in *Princ.* 1,4,5:

Neque ingenitas et coaeternas Deo creaturas dicamus, neque rursus, cum nihil boni prius egerit Deus, in id ut ageret esse conversum, cum verus sit ille sermo qui scriptus est quia "Omnia in sapientia fecisti."<sup>371</sup> Et si utique in Sapientia omnia facta sunt, cum Sapientia semper fuerit, *secundum praefigurationem et praeformationem semper erant* in Sapientia ea, quae protinus etiam *substantialiter facta sunt*.

The eternal presence of the *logoi* of all things in Christ-Logos-Wisdom is presented by Origen as the right solution against the wrong ones of the creatures' coeternity with God and a creation in time before which God was idle. Indeed, *ibid.* 1,2,2 Origen states that the Son, who is the Logos and Wisdom, included *ab aeterno* the "principles," "reasons," and "forms" of the whole creation (*initia*, *rationes*, and *species* in Rufinus's version probably correspond to ἀρχαί, λόγοι, and εἶδη in Origen's Greek *Vorlage*<sup>372</sup>).

<sup>370</sup> See my "Clement's Notion of the Logos."

<sup>371</sup> Psalm 102:24.

<sup>372</sup> I agree with Torsten Tollefsen that these are the Greek words that underlie the Latin words (*Christocentric Cosmology*, 36.).

Eriugena returns in more detail to the theme of the restoration of creation in God in *Periph.* 5,20. First, in the resurrection, the difference between the two human genders will be eliminated and human nature will be restored to unity, to the blessed condition that would obtain if the human being had not sinned (*sicut fieret si non peccaret*; later on, in 5,979CD, John will state even more clearly that the general resurrection will be the universal restoration of human nature to its original state before the fall; in this way, Eriugena is on the same line as Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor<sup>373</sup>). Then the world will be absorbed into Paradise, so that there will be only Paradise, and earth will be absorbed into heaven, and only heaven will remain. Eriugena underlines that all inferior realities will be resolved into the respective superior ones: genders will be resolved into the human being because they are inferior to the human being (*inferior est sexus homine* in *Periph.* 5,893D; *homo melior est quam sexus* in *Periph.* 2,534a); the earth is inferior to Paradise and earthly bodies are inferior to heavenly bodies. All sense-perceptible creatures will then be transformed into intelligible ones, and the whole of creation will become intelligible. Finally, the whole of the intelligible creation will be united to its Creator and will be one and the same thing in It and with It. This will be the *telos*, the end of all and the wonderful and ineffable unification (*adunatio*) of all.<sup>374</sup> With "Paradise" Eriugena means the restoration of human nature to its original condition which is realised thanks to the assumption of humanity by Christ (*in ipso humana natura restaurata est*); it is the uncorrupted, original state of human nature, such as it was in God's plan: *humanae naturae integritas*.<sup>375</sup> This is much the same view as Gregory Nyssen's and Maximus the Confessor's, as I have clarified.

<sup>373</sup> *Non enim aliud resurgere, aliud redire.*

<sup>374</sup> *In resurrectione enim sexus auferetur, et natura adunabitur, et erit solummodo homo, sicut fieret si non peccaret. Deinde orbis terrarum paradiso adunabitur, et non erit nisi paradisos. Deinde caelum et terra adunabuntur et non erit nisi solum caelum. Et notandum quod semper inferiora in superiora transmutantur. Sexus quippe in hominem mouetur, quoniam inferior est sexus homine. Orbis terrarum, quia inferior est, in paradisum. Terrena, quia inferiora sunt, in caelestia mutabuntur corpora. Deinde totius sensibilis creaturae adunatio et in intelligibilem transmutatio sequitur, ita ut uniuersa creatura intelligibilis efficiatur. Postremo uniuersalis creatura Creatori adunabitur, et erit in ipso et cum ipso unum. Et hic est finis omnium uisibilium et inuisibilium, quoniam omnia uisibilia in intelligibilia, et intelligibilia in ipsum Deum transibunt mirabili et ineffabili adunatione.*

<sup>375</sup> *Ille enim iam in paradiso erat, quia in ipso humana natura restaurata est [...] hinc datur intelligi, non aliud esse paradisum, in quem resurgens ingressus est, praeter ipsam humanae naturae integritatem, quae est paradisos qui sanctis promittitur, in quem ex parte, anima uidelicet, iam ingressi sunt, ex parte, corpore dico, extra adhuc sunt. Adunauit itaque in se orbem terrarum paradiso. Ipsi siquidem orbis terrarum paradisos erat.*



The restoration of the human being will expand up to the apokatastasis of the whole creation. As Eriugena explains in 5,25, the whole universe has been reconstituted or restored (*restitutus est*) in God's Logos incarnated, for now *specialiter*, that is, only *in nuce*, through the restoration of the human being in Christ, but in the *telos* it will be restored (*restaurabitur*) in its wholeness, *generaliter et uniuersaliter*. The *telos* will thus coincide with universal restoration or apokatastasis. For Christ will accomplish in all beings (*omnibus*), in the end, what he has now accomplished in himself, since, as Eriugena daringly states, when God's Logos assumed humanity, it assumed every creature (*omnem creaturam*) at the same time; therefore, the salvation and restoration of all humanity (*saluauit et restaurauit*) implies the restoration (*restaurauit*) of the whole of creation.<sup>376</sup> In this fundamental passage on apokatastasis, the terms *restauratio*, *restauo*, and *restituo*, which repeatedly appear, correspond to ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι.

It is also very clear that apokatastasis for Eriugena, just as for Origen and Nyssen, depends on Christ, an incarnated Christ who is also a cosmic Christ, the Logos, who has assumed every creature in itself.<sup>377</sup> This is an idea that was already adumbrated in Bardaisan, in a Middle-Platonic framework, as I have pointed out,<sup>378</sup> and that passes through the concept of the human being as a microcosm, which Eriugena explains very well in his Homily on the Johanne Prologue, in which he also draws the impressive equation that "to say *homo* is equivalent to saying *omnis*" (19). The universal import of Christ's salvation and restoration is made clear by Eriugena in a series of other passages as well. In *Periph.* 5,24, in particular, he declares that Christ's incarnation has performed the salvation of every creature, in heaven and on earth: *Sed firmissime credat, et purissime intelligat, quod per inhumanationem Filii Dei omnis creatura, in caelo et in terra, salua facta est*. In *Periph.* 5,994AB Eriugena insists on Christ's assumption of humanity as a whole and the unity of all in Christ, "when humans will be like angels," because Christ has unified the human and the divine nature in himself, *totus Deus in toto homine et totus homo in toto Deo*. Thus, Eriugena foretells the restoration (*reuer-*

<sup>376</sup> *Totus itaque mundus in Uerbo Dei unigenito, incarnato, inhumanato adhuc specialiter restitutus est, in fine uero mundi generaliter et universaliter in eodem restaurabitur. Quod enim specialiter in seipso perfecit, generaliter in omnibus perficiet. Non dico in omnibus hominibus solummodo, sed in omni sensibili creatura. Ipsum siquidem Dei Uerbum, quando accepit humanam naturam, nullam creatam substantiam praetermisit, quam non acceperit. Accipiens igitur humanam naturam, omnem creaturam accepit. Ac per hoc, si humanam naturam, quam accepit, saluauit et restaurauit, omnem profecto creaturam uisibilem et inuisibilem restaurauit.*

<sup>377</sup> On the unity and multiplicity of Christ-Logos see my "Clement's Notion of the Logos."

<sup>378</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section on Bardaisan.

surā) of all of Christ's "limbs" *et unus in omnibus et omnes in uno unum et erit et apparebit et erunt et apparebunt*. In *Periph.* 5,27 Eriugena insists on the assumption of the totality of humanity on the part of the Logos and the restoration of all realities in itself: *Si Dei Uerbum humanitatem accepit, non partem eius, quae nulla est, sed uniuersaliter totam accepit. Et si totam accepit, totam profecto in seipso restituit, quoniam in ipso restaurata sunt omnia*. In the immediate prosecution of this same passage, Eriugena also observes that God's Logos does not deliver any human being to eternal punishment, since human beings are creatures of God.<sup>379</sup>

To this effect, in *Periph.* 5,929A–930D Eriugena quotes, in Rufinus's translation, a very long passage of Origen from Book 3 of Περὶ ἀρχῶν, which comments on 1 Cor 15:26. Origen here is speaking *de consummatione mundi*, which is the supreme good to which every rational nature tends, when God will be "all in all." This means that God will be all goods for every single creature, once they are purified from their vices: *rationabilis mens expurgata ab omni uitiorum faece*. Given this purification, Origen can say that evil will remain nowhere: *nusquam malum. Omnia enim et Deus est, cui iam non adiacet malum [...] amoto omni malitiae sensu*. This will be the restoration of the original state of humanity (*Sic ergo finis ad principium reparatur et rerum exitus collatus initiis restituet illum statum*). Origen, and Eriugena with him, underline that God will be not only in few or in many, but in all, absolutely, once both evil and death have vanished altogether:

Et non in paucis aliquibus, uel pluribus, sed ut in *omnibus* ipse sit omnia, cum *nusquam mors*, nusquam aculeus mortis, *nusquam omnino malum*. Tunc uere Deus omnia in omnibus erit.

In such a condition, harmony and unity will reign, and there cannot be disagreement (*ibid.* 930C).<sup>380</sup> Therefore, death, "the last enemy" (1 Cor 15:28), an appellative of the devil, i.e. spiritual death, must disappear. But the devil is not destroyed in his substance, which is good in that it is a creature of God, but rather his perverse will shall be abolished:

Propterea nanque [*sic*] etiam nouissimus inimicus *diabolus, qui mors appellatur, destrui dicitur*, ut neque ultra triste sit aliquid, ubi mors non est, neque diuersum sit, ubi non est inimicus. Destrui sane nouissimus inimicus ita intelligendus est, non ut substantia eius, quae a Deo facta est, pereat, sed ut

<sup>379</sup> *Nihil humanitatis, quam totam accepit, perpetuis poenis insolubilibusque malitiae, quam tormentorum calamitas sequitur, nexibus obnoxium relinquit. In nullo enim damnat Deus, quod fecit, sed quod non fecit, punit.*

<sup>380</sup> *Ut sint omnes unum sicut et Pater cum Filio unum [...] ubi omnes unum sunt, iam diuersitas non erit.*

propositum et uoluntas inimica, quae non a Deo sed ab ipso processit, *intereat*. Destructur ergo, *non ut non sit*, sed ut inimicus et mors non sit. Nihil enim omnipotenti impossibile est, *nec insanabile est aliquid factori suo*.

The last sentence is that in which, as I have argued, Origen corrected Plato with respect to those who are ἀνίατοι.<sup>381</sup> Eriugena, who is quoting Origen extensively, remarks that Origen is clearer than Ambrose—his follower—on this score (930D): Ambrose stated that the demons will not remain forever, that their evilness may not be absolutely eternal,<sup>382</sup> but this can mean either that the demons will be eliminated together with their evilness, or that their evilness will perish, while their substance will remain. Origen clearly embraced the latter option. The very names of the demons and the devil, such as enemy and death, do not indicate their nature, but their perverse will (930D–931A).<sup>383</sup> Eriugena adduces Ps. Dionysius as well in support of the thesis that demons are not evil by nature (931A–935B).<sup>384</sup> Indeed, as Eriugena states again through Ps. Dionysius soon after (934BC), demons are evil not on account of what they are, but on account of what they are not, and more specifically on account of their weakness and instability and their neglectfulness<sup>385</sup> (the latter is the very same defect that Origen ascribes to all those, angels or humans, do not care for their own spiritual development and do not strive to pursue virtue). Similarly, in 927C the teacher repeats that *Deum nullam naturam quam fecit punire, nec in humana nec in daemonum substantia, sed quod non fecit in omnibus punit, hoc est*

<sup>381</sup> See my “The Philosophical Stance.”

<sup>382</sup> 928C: *Non semper manebunt, ne malitia eorum possit esse perpetua*.

<sup>383</sup> *Talia siquidem nomina, daemonium* [versio IV; *daemonum* versio II], *diabolus, nouissimus inimicus et mors, non sunt naturae, sed prauae uoluntatis uocabula*.

<sup>384</sup> *Lege magnum Dionysium Ariopagitam in libro De diuinis nominibus* [...] “*Sed neque daemones,*” inquit, “*natura mali.*” The statement in *Periph.* 5,941AB that the apokatastasis of demons is not sure and that neither the Bible nor the Fathers say anything about this is in flat contradiction with the last passage I quoted. Moreover, it conflicts with its immediate context: while the *Nutritor* has just said that he will speak of the *reditus* or restoration of humans, leaving aside the question of the demons, this passage entirely focuses on the demons themselves; then Eriugena actually tackles the *reditus* of human beings. The invitation to honour the difficult question of the salvation of the devil with silence (*illam obscuritatem silentio honorificamus*) seems to be a reminiscence of Maximus the Confessor, who wanted to honour with silence the doctrine of apokatastasis itself. See also *ibid.* 951C, in which Eriugena invites readers to honour with silence (*silentio honorifica*) the eschatological mysteries, before which *non solum humana uerum etiam angelica deficit ratio*.

<sup>385</sup> *Docet* [sc. Dionysius] *etiam daemones non secundum quod sunt malos esse, sed secundum quod non sunt, mali dicuntur. Et quid in eis malum dicitur? Aperte declarat, infirmitatem uidelicet eorum, qua seruare suum nolunt principium (summum scilicet bonum ex quo sunt), neglegentiam quoque eorum.*

*irrationabiles peruersae uoluntatis motus* (see also *ibid.* 950D).<sup>386</sup> This is why not even the evilness of the demons is eternal, as Ambrose—quoted by Eriugena—stated commenting on Luke: *daemonum autem malitiam non esse perpetuam beatus Ambrosius in expositione in Lucam apertissime docet* (928B).

What God did not create is evil and sin; what is punished with destruction is sin itself, which God did not create. For God punishes sin, which he did not create (*punit quod non fecit*), but does not condemn his own creatures (*non damnat quod fecit*). This is a notion that Eriugena repeats again and again in his *Periphyseon*.<sup>387</sup> In *Periph.* 5,923CD he expresses this thought in a particularly clear way; although I have already quoted a part of this passage, it is now good to read it in full:

Si Dei Uerbum humanitatem accepit, non partem eius, quae nulla est, sed uniuersaliter *totam accepit*. Et si totam accepit, *totam perfecto*<sup>388</sup> *in se ipso restituit*, quoniam in ipso *restaurata sunt omnia et nihil humanitatis*, quam totam accepit, *perpetuis poenis insolubilibusque malitiae* (quam tormentorum calamitas sequitur) *nexibus obnoxium reliquit*. In nullo enim damnat Deus quod fecit, sed *quod non fecit punit*. Nam et praeuaricantium angelorum natura non punit nec punitus est, *illorum uero malitiam et impietatem nociuamque potentiam*, quemadmodum et malorum hominum eis adhaerentium, *extinguet*. Et fortassis *illorum erit aeterna damnatio suae malitiae impietatisque uniuersalis abolitio*.

What will be condemned is evilness, which will be destroyed. Rational creatures will thus be purified and restored, as the *Nutritor* illustrates extensively in *Periph.* 5,944A–946A. God,

*liberans ex delicto separansque quod fecit, [...] puniri sinit quod non fecit. [...] causa totius peccati est, siue in angelo siue in homine, propria peruersaque uoluntas. [...] Est autem intimae uirtutis defectus [...] Punitur itaque irrationabilis motus peruersae uoluntatis in natura rationabili, ipsa natura [...] bona, salua, integra, illaesa, incontaminata, incorruptibilis, impassibilis, immutabilis, participatione summi boni permanente, ubique beata gloriosissimaque in electis, in quibus deificatur, optima in reprobis quos continet, ne illorum substantialis proprietas in nihilum redigatur, hoc est, ne naturalium bonorum [...] patiatur interitum.*

Gaudet [sc. natura rationalis] contemplatione ueritatis in his qui perfectam beatitudinem possident, gaudet administratione substantialitatis in his

<sup>386</sup> *Suus conditor omne quod in ea [sc. humanitate] fecit exornat et nullo modo punit; omne autem quod in ea non fecit [...] impunitum fieri non permittit.*

<sup>387</sup> 5,923CD; 927BC; 943D–944A; 950CD; 955D; 960.

<sup>388</sup> *Perfecto* is the reading of *Versio IV*; *perfecto* is the variant reading in *Versio II*. *Perfecto* refers to Christ in the syntax of the sentence.

qui suorum delictorum poenas soluunt, in omnibus tota perfecta, suo similis creatori. *Cunctis uitiorum sordibus [...] purgata, in pristinum conditionis suae statum restituta* reuertetur, redemptoris et susceptoris sui gratia reuocata. [...] *Nulla malitia, nulla mors, nulla miseria [...] relinquetur*. Omnia quippe uisibilia et inuisibilia in suis causis quiescent. Sola uero *illicita uoluntas* malorum hominum et angelorum, sauciata prauorum sui morum, in se ipsa torquebitur. [...] *salua et integra et incontaminata omnique contraria passione libera* erit et semper erit humana natura.<sup>389</sup>

This idea is briefly reiterated later, in *Periph.* 1007C: *nihil obstat credere totum genus humanum et in Christo redemptum et in caelestem Hierusalem reuersurum*. Christ is the agent of human restoration in that it is in him that human nature is renovated, unified, “spiritualised,” and restored (ibid. 990AB).<sup>390</sup> In 1002A this notion is even clearer; Christ, by receiving humanity, heals it:

Uniuersum genus humanum sanguine suo redempto *omnique impietate atque malitia detersum* de morte ducet ad uitam, quando in nullo homine nihil praeter simplicitate naturae apparebit, merito ipsius qui eam totam accepit *totamque sanauit*.<sup>391</sup>

When Eriugena comes to discuss the modalities of the otherworldly torment, he remarks, like Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, that hell is not a place but a state, as the etymology of ἄιδης from ἄ + ἡδύς, “not sweet, not pleasant, not joyful” (thus *tristitia*) makes clear (*Periph.* 5,954C–955A,<sup>392</sup> 971B), and resorts again, like in *De praedestinatione*, to Origen’s conception, and cites Ambrose who followed it. In 936A he explains that punishments will not go on in any physical place, nor in the totality of the nature, but *in malarum uoluntatum corruptarumque conscientiarum peruersis motibus [...] Extinguetur omnino omnis facultas peccandi, male faciendi, impie agendi*. The destruction of any capacity for sin was already expressly envisaged by one of the

<sup>389</sup> See also *Periph.* 5,973B, in which the incompatibility between the eventual restoration and the permanence of evilness is underlined.

<sup>390</sup> *Christum uidelicet, in quo nostra natura (corpus dico et animam et intellectum) renouata est, et in unum simplicata et de composita incomposita facta [...] corpus simul et anima in spiritum, spiritus in ipsum Deum*.

<sup>391</sup> In *Periph.* 5,1001D–1002A, the fact that the whole of the people of Israel was liberated from the Egyptian captivity (omnes unanimiter [...] *fugisse et nemine excepto de manibus crudelissimae potestatis liberatos fuisse*) is taken as the symbol of the liberation of the whole of humanity from evil and its restoration, *totius humanitatis reditus ad pristinum naturae statum*.

<sup>392</sup> *Graeci autem solito more res acutius considerantes expressiusque significantes, ΑΔΗΝ, ut diximus, hoc est tristitiam, appellauerunt infernum [...] rerumque quas intemperanter amauerant defectu et priuatione, ex quibus tristitia nascitur*.

very first supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis, Bardaisan of Edessa,<sup>393</sup> who at the end of the *Liber legum regionum* foresaw: “there will come a time when even *this capacity for harm that remains in them* [sc. in creatures] *will be brought to an end* by the instruction that will obtain in a different arrangement of things. And, once that new world will be constituted, *all evil movements will cease, all rebellions will come to an end*, and the fools will be *persuaded*, and the lacks will be filled, and there will be safety and peace, as a gift of the Lord of all natures.” However, Bardaisan and Origen foresee a universal conversion of all wills to the Good—the wills shall thus cease to be perverse and shall enjoy blessedness—after the necessary purification and illumination, whereas Eriugena seems to insist much more on the dichotomy between the nature of all creatures, which will enjoy beatitude, and the perverse will of some of them, which will be punished; he insists less on the purification and conversion of this perverse will (he probably tended to feel it less necessary, given the perfect felicity of the nature of all beings he postulated anyway); nevertheless, he affirms this purification in some passages, as I shall show.

For Eriugena, just as for the Origenian Ambrose, whom he cites from his homilies on Luke,<sup>394</sup> the evangelical “outer darkness” is not a physical place, but the privation of the intellectual light, who is Christ (*Periph.* 5,936B–937A). For, as the intelligent disciple states, *nihil aliud appetendum nisi gaudium de ueritate, quae est Christus, et nihil aliud fugiendum nisi eius absentia* [...] *Tolle a me Christum, nullum bonum mihi remanebit. Nullum tormentum me terret, eius siquidem priuatio et absentia totius rationabilis creaturae tormentum est, et nullum aliud* (*Periph.* 5,989A).<sup>395</sup> That otherworldly torments will affect the perverse will of the wicked and demons, which will be unable to be satisfied or to harm, is stated in *Periph.* 5,937B, where it is also made clear that this will achieve the elimination of their evilness and impiety:

<sup>393</sup> See above, Ch. 1.

<sup>394</sup> 936C: *Quicumque extra promissa sunt caelestium mandatorum in tenebris exterioribus sunt, quia mandata Dei lumen sunt.*

<sup>395</sup> I have adopted here a different punctuation from that of Jeaneau's edition. Jeaneau places a comma after *remanebit* and a period after *terret*; in this way, *nullum tormentum me terret* seems to be a consequence of *tolle a me Christum*, just as *nullum bonum mihi remanebit* is a consequence of *tolle a me Christum*. I rather think that *nullum tormentum me terret* is a new sentence, and its explanation comes from the following statement: *eius siquidem priuatio et absentia totius rationabilis creaturae tormentum est, et nullum aliud*. Since the torment of rational creatures is the absence of Christ and nothing else, the disciple does not fear physical torments. Of course he is aware that the absence of Christ is even worse than physical torments, since it implies the absence of all goods at once.

de diabolicarum uero peruersarum uoluntatum supplicio quid aliud intelligendum, praeter illarum aeternam refrenationem *suaeque impietatis aeternum interitum?*

Like Origen, Eriugena states in more than one passage that passions and vices are a torment to themselves. One example is given in *Periph.* 5,938A, in which the demons' envy for humanity, and in particular for its resurrection and its escaping their domination, is presented as a torment to them: *et haec est inuidia, qua maxime intra semet ipsa diabolica punitur iniquitas. Torquetur enim magnam communemque resurrectionem humanae substantiae [...] in immutabilem immortalitatem deque sua potestate elapsam perspicens.* This is also why Eriugena states that each one will be judge of one's deeds at the Last Judgement (ibid. 997BC); thus, one's good deeds will have one rejoice, but one's evil deeds will torment that person. Passions and evil will have to vanish and be eradicated from all natures, either human or angelic; this is claimed, for instance, in *Periph.* 5,940A, in which Eriugena also appropriates Gregory of Nyssa's statements in *De anima* on the derivative and spurious nature of  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta$  in human souls:<sup>396</sup> *Quae cuncta non ex prima conditione humanitatis sed ex generali eius peccato initium sumpserunt. Ideoque [...] peribunt, quando ipsius humanitatis prima conditio ab his omnibus similibusque sibi passionibus liberabitur igneque spirituali diuinae gratiae purgabitur.* This is also one of the passages in which Eriugena speaks of otherworldly purification. In support of this view, Isaiah's words in reference to Jerusalem's purification and sanctification are adduced: *Sanctificabo eam in igne ardente et deuorabit sicut foenum materiem.* The selfsame Scriptural quotation, in support of the same argument, is given ibid. 960CD:

"Deficient peccatores a terra et iniqui ita ut *non sint*": non enim *substantiam* illorum, sed *peccatum* et iniquitatem defectura esse credendum est. Et quod beatus Hieronymus in expositione Ezechiel ab Esaia propheta de generali *totius humanae naturae purgatione* in figura Hierusalem introduxit: "*Sanctificabo eam in igne ardente*" [...] sanctificabitur, id est *purgabitur*, in ipsa natura ad imaginem Dei facta.

A further indication of the purifying and corrective nature of torments for Eriugena is found in *Periph.* 5,943CD, where he draws a comparison between divine and human justice: the latter is similar to the former only in case it does not aim at punishing the wrongdoer, but at correcting him.<sup>397</sup> That

<sup>396</sup> On this see my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*.

<sup>397</sup> *Et saecularium causarum iudices, si tamen non libidine uindictae verum correctionis gratia reos suppliciis dignos examinant, non naturam in eis, sed delictum torqueri appe-*

correction is intended for the restoration of humanity to God is also declared *ibid.* 953B: *corrigen eam correctamque ad se ipsum [sc. Deum] reuocare, non autem incorrectam semperque expulsam et in infinitum elongatam uoluit.* Likewise, *ibid.* 948B Eriugena explains that no rational creature will suffer in order to be punished, but it is rather evilness that will be destroyed: *non ut ipsa [sc. humanitas] in se ipsa poenas luat, sed ut illa quae contra uoluntatem creatoris sui attraxerat, extra ipsam damnentur* penitusque pereant, *malitiam dico et impietatem [...] omnino damnabuntur*, ne ei perpetuo noceant. The destruction and “punishment” of evilness will bring about the purification and restoration of rational creatures: *sola iniustitia punita et interempta, ipsa purgata et intemerata relinquetur natura, in ipsos gradus de quibus peccando corruerat* reuersura (*ibid.* 964A).

An important knot to be solved, however, concerns the supposed eternity of these torments, which seems to be declared, for instance, in Matt 25:41. Eriugena, who read Greek, knew that in this and similar passages Scripture employs αἰώνιος and not αἰθεριος, a distinction that was completely blurred in Latin, with the translation of both with *aeternus*. Eriugena, like Origen, Didymus, Diodore, Theodore, was very well aware of the ambiguity of αἰώνιος in Greek. Eriugena’s refutation, however, is not linguistic, but ontological and Scriptural. From the ontological point of view, only God is eternal, and torments could never be coeternal with God (*Periph.* 5,926A–927A; 934D–935A; 941AB; 960AB; 963CD). The first passage is the most significant and deserves full quotation and comment. The teacher declares:

De diuinae naturae omniumque quae in ipsa et per ipsam et ad ipsam et ex ipsa facta sunt aeternitate, et quod ipsa sola uere ac singulariter *aeterna* sit. [...] Malitia pedisequasque eius (mortem dico et miseras diuersorumque delictorum poenas) arbitrarie a Deo factas aut diuitiae uirtutis participes esse? [...] Miro qua ratione deliberas et haesitas *malitiam mortemque in humanitate*, quam totam Dei Uerbum in se ipso assumptam *liberauit, aeternaliter permansuram*, cum ratio doceat *nullum contrarium diuinae bonitati uitaeque ac beatitudini possit esse coaeternum*, diuina siquidem bonitas *consumet malitiam, aeterna uita absorbebit mortem*.

Eriugena is clearly taking over, I think, Origen’s syllogism that death cannot be coeternal with life and will be annihilated:

Aeternum aeterno *contrarium* non erit sed idem. Nunc autem certum est mortem uitae esse *contrarium*: certum est ergo quod, *si uita aeterna est, mors esse non possit aeterna* [...] cum *mors animae*, quae est nouissimus inimicus, fuerit destructa, regnum mortis pariter cum morte destructum erit.

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*tunt. Quoniam uero delicta per se, naturali subiecto segregata, punire non possunt, propterea corpus simul cum delicto puniunt.*



This syllogism is found in Origen's *Commentary on Romans* (5,7), a work that was available to Eriugena and is extensively quoted in his *Periphyseon*. On this basis, Eriugena can confidently assert that evilness and death will perish from every rational creature: *in omni rationali creatura mors aculeusque eius (peccatum dico) omnisque malitia interitura sit* (*Periph.* 5,929A), because *non conueniret immortalis creatoris bonitati imaginem suam aeterna morte detineri* (ibid. 953B), where, moreover, the argument of "what is worthy of God / what becomes God" is applied by Eriugena, just as by Origen and other Origenian authors, to the eventual apokatastasis. In addition, Eriugena speaks not simply of God, but of God's *bonitas*, which for Origen and other supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis, including Augustine in his anti-Manichaean phase, is the real agent of apokatastasis itself.<sup>398</sup> In *Periph.* 5,1002D–1003A, too, Eriugena is adamant that Christ liberates all humanity from death, not only the death of the body, but also the death of the soul, precisely that which is mentioned by Origen in his syllogism: *non solum ipsius [sc. mortis] qua anima segregatur a corpore, uerum etiam qua Deus animam deserit per peccatum. Ex qua duplici morte totum genus humanum liberat lux illa [sc. Christ]. Non solum generaliter mors corporis, uerum etiam mors mentis destruetur*. The same is also stated in *Periph.* 5,985D.<sup>399</sup>

The impossibility of the coeternity of life and death, and of Good and evil, is stated by Eriugena even more clearly in *Periph.* 5,935A, where he argues that in God's creatures only what God made will remain, that evil may not be coeternal with the Good, who is God:

Quod in eis est a summo Deo factum solummodo in eis permansurum, nullo modoque puniendum; quod autem ex Deo non est (illorum uidelicet *malitia*) *periturum*, ne in aliqua creatura, siue humana siue angelica, *malitia possit fieri perpetua et bonitati coaeterna*. Similiter de *morte* et *miseria* intelligendum, *ne uitae et beatitudini quid contrarium atque coaeuum* intelligatur. [...] certe *mors* de natura rerum *abolebitur*. [...] Sola uniuersalis creatura, omni faece malitiae et impietatis *purgata*, omni morte corruptionis *libera* penitusque absoluta remaneat. Quando humanitas in resurrectione *restaurabitur*, *omni impietate et malitia et morte absoluetur*. Ac per hoc neque mali neque impii resurgent. (Sola siquidem natura resurget,)<sup>400</sup> *impietas uero et malitia aeterna dampnatione [sic] peribunt*.

Again, the ideas of *coaeternum* and *contrarium* on which this kind of syllogism is based, along with the conclusion of the destruction of death and

<sup>398</sup> See above in this same chapter, section on Augustine.

<sup>399</sup> *Non solum mortem carnis, sed etiam mortem mentis [...] auferens*.

<sup>400</sup> These words are absent from *versio IV*, but I supply them from both *versio V* and *versio II*.

evilness, seem to me to be another clear reminiscence of Origen's above-quoted syllogism in his *Commentary on Romans*. In *Periph.* 5,939B as well, Origen's syllogism is echoed again, with the joint notions of *coaeternum* and *contrarium*, in the disciple's words: *nihil Deo coaeternum est aut ex diametro contrarium*.<sup>401</sup>

Both Eriugena and Origen implicitly ground their argument in a strong ontological monism: evil (evilness) cannot be coeternal with the Good, because the latter is God, and only God/the Good is ontologically subsistent, whereas evil is a lack; it is a privation of Good and being. Eriugena returns to the liberation of all creatures from evil and the power of the devil in their apokatastasis to God in 937C: *De potestate illius post iudicium omnis liberabitur creatura, omninoque absoluetur a seruitute, in principium suum (Deum uidelicet, qui est principium omnium et finis) reuersura*. That evil will not have to be coeternal with God's goodness is declared again in 941B; this is also why even the devil will have to be liberated from it: *dignitas suae primae conditionis priusquam superbiret [...] semper immutabiliter manet manebitque in aeternum [...] impietas quam superbiendo attraxerat penitus peribit, ne diuinae bonitati coaeterna fieri possit*. Torments cannot be coeternal with God. Eriugena offers another reason for this soon after, in *Periph.* 5,935C: if the damned were tormented eternally (*damnandi perpetuo damnabuntur*), without being consumed, they and the world could never return to their primordial causes and thence to God, and, as a consequence, God could never be "all in all."<sup>402</sup>

Also, Scripture contradicts the eternity of these torments especially in 1Tim 2:4, "God wants all humans to be saved and attain the knowledge of Truth" (*Periph.* 5,1006C). I have already quoted, indeed, *Periph.* 5,923CD, in which Eriugena observes that *aeterna damnatio* ought to be understood as the abolition of evilness and impiety. Just as in Origen, what is condemned is evil, and it is condemned to elimination. Soon after (924B), indeed, the argument from the infinity of the Good and the finitude of evil is adduced, which was already used by Gregory of Nyssa: if God is the Good and is infinite and evil is finite, evil cannot subsist eternally: *bonitas enim circumscribit*

<sup>401</sup> *Ex diametro contrarium* precisely means what in logic is called "contradictory" (two propositions are contradictory when, if either is true, the other must necessarily be false). This is also the kind of relationship that Origen meant in his syllogism on life and death. The propositions, "life is eternal" and "death is eternal" (or: "there is eternal life" and "there is eternal death") are two contradictories, so that, if life is eternal, death cannot possibly be eternal.

<sup>402</sup> *Ac per hoc non soluetur omnino neque consummabitur, hoc est in causas suas non reuersurus, quando Deus omnia in omnibus erit.*

*malitiam penitusque consumit, similiter uita mortem, beatitudo miseriam, uirtus uitia uitiorumque causas*, and Daniel's prophecy is quoted to support the eventual abolition of evilness: *ut consummetur praeuaricatio et finem accipiat peccatum, et deleatur iniquitas, et adducatur iustitia sempiterna*. Another argument for the final vanishing of evil adduced by Eriugena more than once is its ontological non-subsistence, a metaphysical pillar for the apokatastasis doctrine in Origen, Nyssen, Evagrius, and probably also Ps. Dionysius. In *Periph.* 5,925D Eriugena states:

Diuinus itaque animus nullum malum *nullamque malitiam nouit*. Nam si nosset, substantialiter extitissent [...] iam uero et causa carent ac per hoc in numero conditarum naturarum *essentialiter non sunt*. [...] Illorum substantias omneque quod in eis fecit et in ipso subsistit, nouit [sc. Deus]. Quod autem illorum peruersis motibus naturae ab ipso substitutae accidit, omnino ignorat.

The idea that God does not know evil is again typical of Origen. Likewise, for instance, in *Periph.* 5,946C Eriugena declares that evilness is not a substance, but a privation: *non enim ex natura uel gratia prouenit quod per priuationem nihil est, quod neque substantia est, neque naturale accidens, neque uirtus*.

A further explication of the modalities of apokatastasis is offered by Eriugena in *Periph.* 5,21 and 39: first, the material world will return to its own causes, which, as I have mentioned, are the Ideas Middle-Platonically conceived as Ideas in the mind of God. Second, there will be the general return of the whole of human nature, saved in Christ, to the original condition of its creation and “to the dignity of the divine image” (*Periph.* 5,39,948D); the notion that apokatastasis will be a restoration of the divine image is explained *ibid.* 952C (*anima rationalis ad imaginem Dei facta in eum, cuius imago est et similitudo*, reuertetur) and 957C: *anima itaque ad imaginem Dei facta, sicut numquam corrumpitur per se ipsam, ita numquam punitur*. Third, the blessed will cross all the boundaries of nature “in a superessential manner” to reach the divinity itself, and to be “one and the same thing in it and with it” (*ibid.*).

Indeed, Eriugena in 5,36 distinguishes two ways or stages in the restoration of humanity: the first is the “restoration [*restauratio*] of the whole human nature in Christ,” which is equated to the return to Paradise, and the other is the beatitude and deification (*beatitudo, deificatio*) of those who will ascend to God himself, which is assimilated to the act of eating of the tree of life, i.e. Christ, and is described as eternal peace in the contemplation of truth (*ibid.* 979B).<sup>403</sup> However, the return of all creatures to

<sup>403</sup> *Qui reditus duobus modis consideratur, quorum unus est, qui totius humanae naturae*

their primordial causes and thence to God is also described as peace and rest in *Periph.* 5,991C.<sup>404</sup> In 5,949AB Eriugena distinguishes the restoration of humanity to the angelic state from which it fell (*reditus ipsius generaliter per se ipsam in angelicum statum quem deseruit*) and the transformation of some into God, their deification proper (*dono diuinae gratiae super omnia, post se relinquentes omnia, in ipsum Deum transferentur*).<sup>405</sup> This is the *telos* as was conceived especially by Evagrius, in terms of contemplation, but also by Origen and Nyssen, who identified the *telos* with deification. Eriugena was also reminiscent of 1 Tim 2:4–6: “God our Saviour wants all humans to be saved and reach the knowledge of Truth.” Restoration and salvation is granted to all humans, and indeed to all creatures of God, by nature and grace, whereas deification is a privilege of some human beings, a special transformation, and is a gift of grace only.<sup>406</sup> In *Periph.* 5,948D Eriugena makes the difference clear between *restitutio* (ἀποκατάστασις) and *deificatio* (θέωσις).<sup>407</sup>

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*docet in Christo restaurationem, alter uero, qui non solam ipsam restaurationem generaliter perspicit, uerum etiam eorum qui in ipsum Deum ascensuri sunt, beatitudinem et deificationem. Aliud enim est in paradysum redire, aliud de ligno uitae comedere [...] ligni autem uitae, quod est Christus, fructus est beata uita, pax aeterna in contemplatione ueritatis, quae proprie dicitur deificatio.*

See also the words of the teacher *ibid.* 1001B: *reditus omnium, quae in suas causas reuersura sunt, quando mundus iste sensibilis soluetur et mundus ille intelligibilis [...] in Christo implebitur, dupliciter intelligitur. Est enim generalis et est specialis.* The “general return” is the restoration of all creatures to the principle of their creation; the “special return” is the restoration of those who *non solum ad primordia naturae reuocabuntur, sed etiam ultra omnem naturalem dignitatem in causa omnium (quae Deus est) reditus sui finem constituent.*

<sup>404</sup> *Quando omnis sensibilis creatura in intelligibilem et omnis intelligibilis in causas, et causae in causarum causa (quae Deus est) mutabuntur aeternaque requie gaudebunt ineffabilique claritate fulgebunt et sabbatizabunt.*

<sup>405</sup> This concept is further explained *ibid.* 950A (*ultra omnes naturales uirtutes iustorum beatitudo per conditoris gratiam exaltabitur*) and 951B: *homines mortales per naturam [...] in immortalem Deum mutabuntur per gratiam.* But the passage from mortality to immortality is not reserved for the deified only.

<sup>406</sup> *Omnes nos, qui homines sumus, nemine excepto, in spiritualibus corporibus et integritate naturalium bonorum resurgemus, et in antiquitatem primae conditionis nostrae reuertemus, sed non omnes immutabimur in deificationis gloriam, quae superat omnem naturam et paradysum. Itaque sicut aliud est generaliter resurgere, aliud specialiter immutari, ita aliud est in paradysum redire, aliud de ligno uitae comedere. [...] Non omnes plane, sed soli qui mundum et carnem uicerunt [...] ex gratia siquidem et natura omnibus hominibus communiter praestatur in paradysum redire, soli uero gratia solis deificatis de ligno uitae edere (ibid.).* Cfr. *ibid.* 980B: those who will be deified are those who have won the world and flesh (*soli qui mundum et carnem uicerint*); Eriugena adduced John's words in Revelation: *uincenti dabo edere de ligno uitae*. The consumption of the tree of life results exclusively from grace and is reserved for those who are deified: *sola uero gratia solis deificatis.*

<sup>407</sup> In *Periph.* 5,1015 BC Eriugena remarks upon the rarity of the term *deificatio* in Latin, and its equivalence to θέωσις.

aliud est eandem humanam naturam in suam gratiam quam peccando perdidit (diuinae uidelicet imaginis dignitatem) *restitui*, aliud uniuscuiusque electorum propriam in bonis meritis conscientiam [...] super omnem humanitatis uirtutem *deificari*.

The same difference is repeated in *Periph.* 5,978D–979A, between *totius humanae naturae in Christo restaurationem* and *eorum qui in ipsum Deum ascensuri sunt beatitudinem et deificationem* (see also the distinction between *naturae restauratio* and *electorum deificatio* in 979C). Likewise, Eriugena uses the imagery of the Sabbath in *Periph.* 5,1016A: restoration is the *generale sabbatum in omnibus diuinis operibus*; deification will be reserved for the angels and the elect among humans and will be the *speciale sabbatum sabbatorum*. Apokatastasis is absolutely universal, not only for all humanity, but also for the whole of creation, while *theōsis* is for the elect. To support apokatastasis, Eriugena cites Luke's parables of the prodigal son, the lost sheep, and the lost drachma (1001B–1006A). All of these symbolise humanity that was lost, but is restored by Christ. These parables, on Eriugena's interpretation, show that *non partem generis humani sed totum* [*sc. genus*] *restaurandum esse in Christo* (1005CD). And from the Old Testament, in *Periph.* 5,1004A, he quotes Ezechiel's prophecy (Ez 16:55) of the future restoration of Sodom and Samaria, in which the verb ἀποκαθίστημι (in the LXX, known to Eriugena) occurs thrice and is rendered with *restituo* in Latin: *Sodom et filiae eius restituentur sicut fuerunt a principio et Samaria et filiae eius restituentur sicut erant a principio, et tu et filiae tuae restituemini*.

Salvation surely is universal, and coincides with the universal restoration, so that it is safe to assume that for Eriugena apokatastasis will in fact be tantamount to universal salvation. It is telling that he took over the allegory of the Temple used by Gregory of Nyssa at the end of his *De anima* in support of the apokatastasis doctrine. Both Gregory and Eriugena are clear that all humanity will finally be inside the Temple, although the latter insists more on the differentiation of groups within it. Nobody will remain outside; however, not all will occupy the same place inside.<sup>408</sup> The spatial order cor-

<sup>408</sup> *Periph.* 6,981AC: *Et hoc, ut arbitror, in mystica Salomonis templi aedificatione praefiguratum est. Omnes siquidem, nemine excluso, et boni et mali, circumcisi et incircumcisi, masculi et feminae, omnesque totius mundi nationes, siue orationis siue negotii causa undique illuc confluerent, in extremas porticus intrabant, ibique negotia sua peragere sinebantur; soli uero sacerdotes et Leuitae in porticum Sacerdotum et in porticum Salomonis ingrediebantur. Deinde sacerdotes loti et purgati [...] in sanctum templum exterius, ubi erant panes propositionis et candelabra, introibant, nulli uero ultra uelum in Sancta Sanctorum, ubi erat arca et altare thymiamatis, et propitiatorium, et duo Cherubim, nisi summo sacerdoti introire licebat. Ex hoc*

responds to the temporal order that was envisaged by Origen and Nyssen, according to whom all rational creatures will be restored but each in its own order: the saints will come first, then the sinners, in various degrees of sin, and finally the devil. Eriugena does not seem to project the order of merits onto a temporal model, but rather onto a spatial one: the different degrees of glory that the saved creatures will enjoy in the end, from the outer to the inner parts of the Temple, up to the innermost, the Holy of Holies, which is accessible only to those who have achieved union with Christ, the High Priest—unless Eriugena is thinking of a process of sanctification that will take place inside that temple, thus in the eschatological dimension, which would be conceived as dynamic, as it was conceived by Gregory Nyssen, so that those who are not yet sanctified, and can not yet enter the inner part of the Temple, will be sanctified, and will be able to enter it later. This is suggested by his own statement *in isto sanctificati interiora intrabunt*. Christ is indeed the *propitiatorium*, who offered his own human life *pro purificatione et redemptione totius generis humani, nemine excepto [...] in nullo reliquit quod non redemerit et redimendo saluauit et sanctificauit, quoniam ipse est redemptio et salus, purgatio et illuminatio et perfectio uniuersae humanitatis in omnibus et singulis* (ibid. 981D). Universal purification is made coincide with the *telos* ibid. 1016A: *purgabitur enim natura, uentilabitur uitium [...] illuminabuntur abscondita tenebrarum, omnia in omnibus uidebitur Deus*. Faith and adhesion to Christ are indispensable for this, but in his Homily on the Johannine Prologue Eriugena observes that those who receive Christ are deified, and “to those who do not receive him God *offers the occasion to receive him in the future*. For *nobody can deprive anyone* of the possibility of believing in the Son of God and the possibility of becoming children of God, since this is grounded on human free will *and in the help of Grace*” (20). There is even one passage in Book 5 of his *Periphyseon* (984B) in which Eriugena seems to assert that deification will finally be achieved by all: Christ

*omnia et ambit uirtute, disponit prouidentia, regit iustitia, ornat gratia, continet aeternitate, implet sapientia, perficit deificatione. Quoniam ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso et ad ipsum sunt omnia.*

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*datur intelligi, quod omnes homines intra terminos naturalis paradisi, veluti intra quoddam templum, unumquemque in suo ordine contineri, soli uero in isto sanctificati interiora intrabunt, et iterum in sancta sanctorum, ueluti in interiora interiorum, ipsi qui in summo pontifice, Christo uidelicet, sunt, et unum cum ipso et in ipso facti sunt introducentur.*

“Christ perfects *all* with deification.” It is significant that Eriugena chooses to cite Gregory of Nyssa in *Periph.* 5,987C in reference to the eventual deification, and in the case of Gregory it is clear that the eventual deification will be universal, just as apokatastasis will:

Gregorius similiter et incunctanter astruit mutationem corporis tempore resurrectionis in animam, animae in intellectum, *intellectus in Deum*. Ac sic *omnia in omnibus Deus erit, sicut aer uertitur in lucem*.

Yet, this passage of Gregory Nyssen is so important for John the Scot that he chose to echo it in his own conclusion of the last book of his *Periphyseon* (5,1021B): *ita ut in nullo appareat nisi solus Deus, quemadmodum in aere purissimo nihil aliud arridet nisi sola lux*. The very same echo even returns in the conclusion of the letter appended to the fifth book of *Periphyseon*: *donec ueniat illa lux et tenebras recte cognoscentium*<sup>409</sup> *conuertat in lucem*. This does not surprise me, given the preference that Eriugena grants to Gregory of Nyssa especially when it comes to eschatology, so that, for instance, in *Periph.* 5,995BC he expressly rejects Augustine’s opinion concerning the resurrection and rather embraces that of Gregory Nyssen.<sup>410</sup> In the very same way, in *Periph.* 4,814B he rejects Augustine’s interpretation of Eden as a physical place in his *De Genesi ad litteram* (which Eriugena mentions under the title of *Exameron*), 8,1,1, and rather embraces the spiritual exegesis of Gregory of Nyssa. The same disagreement with Augustine’s idea that Adam and

<sup>409</sup> *Recte cognoscentium* is the reading of *versio IV* and *versio V*; *versio II* (here represented only by codd. H M) has *recognoscentium*.

<sup>410</sup> Eriugena observes that *beatus Augustinus in libris De ciuitate Dei incunctanter affirmat* that all human beings will eventually be resurrected with bodies of the same age as Jesus was when he died and rose again. But he disagrees with Augustine and definitely approves the opinion of Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Maximus the Confessor: *beatum Gregorium theologum, sanctum quoque Ambrosium necnon et Maximum uenerabilem magistrum certis rationibus approbare saepe diximus*. Gregory’s opinion is described as follows: *immortalia et spiritualia corpora nullis corporalium formarum liniamentis uel qualitatibus uel quantitativibus circumscribentur propter ineffabilem eorum spiritibus incircumscriptionis adunationem indiscretaeque simplicitatem*. Eriugena soon after explains the reason why Augustine and other Latin Fathers have erred: due to their ignorance of Greek (which moreover confirms that for Eriugena the ignorance of the liberal arts can produce serious theological mistakes; see above and my “Eriugena’s Commentary”): *causa tamen erroris eorum qui in staturam corporis dominici omnia humana corpora resurrectura dogmatizant, non ignoramus*. Minus enim intellegentes quod in graeco est scriptum, ΕΙΣ ΜΕΤΡΟΝ ΗΑΙΚΙΑΣ (*hoc est in mensuram aetatis*) existimabant ΗΑΙΚΙΑΝ proprie ad perfectam corporis aetatem pertinere, cum ΗΑΙΚΙΑ plus animae in uirtutibus quam corporis per localia et temporalia incrementa perfectam significet mensuram. [...] *Nemo sane intelligens praefata Apostoli uerba de perfectione aetatis corporis, sed de plenitudine ecclesiae [...] accipiet*.

Eve had material bodies before the fall and lived in a material paradise<sup>411</sup> is evident in *Periph.* 4,806CD: after quoting from *De civitate Dei* 14,26,1–22 Augustine's description of the felicity of the original couple in paradise (ibid. 806BC), Eriugena observes with irony that it is hardly believable that such a felicity and perfection might ever be reached in material bodies;<sup>412</sup> the same ironic disagreement is clearly expressed by Eriugena already ibid. 805B.<sup>413</sup> For, with Origen, he thought that before the fall Adam and Eve had spiritual bodies. This is why in *Periph.* 4,818BC, after citing again Augustine's hypothesis that the paradise was material (*corporalis paradisus*) and had a spiritual meaning (*spiritualis paradisus significaretur*), Eriugena opposes to this view that of Origen, "the most sublime interpreter of the holy Scripture," which consists in the identification of this paradise with the third heaven to which St. Paul was raptured; this means that Paradise must be spiritual (*spiritualis* or *spiritalis*).<sup>414</sup> The best Patristic authors, Eriugena observes, agree on this.<sup>415</sup> But Epiphanius reproaches Origen and identifies the Paradise with a place on earth, full of sense-perceptible trees and rivers.<sup>416</sup> Epiphanius also disapproves of Origen's interpretation of the "skin tunics" given to Adam and Eve after their fall. His opinion, which is ridiculed by Eriugena as given "without hesitation," is that these were garments made of the skins of some sheep that were found in paradise. Origen's opinion, on the contrary, is praised

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<sup>411</sup> This view of Augustine's later phase is recapitulated by the intelligent disciple in *Periph.* 4,804BC as follows: *omnibus libros illius legentibus, et maxime De Genesi ad litteram et De civitate Dei, manifestissimus sit nil aliud docere de corpore primi hominis ante peccatum, quam animale atque mortale fuisse. Si enim animale non fuisset, quomodo de fructibus Paradisi comedere iuberetur ne deficeret, et de ligno uitae ne senesceret? Nam, ut ipse saepe asserit, primi homines ante praeuocationem de fructibus Paradisi corporaliter comedisse perhibentur. The teacher or Nutritor, at this point, explicitly distances himself from Augustine in an ironic tone: Quisquis uult et potest, respondeat.*

<sup>412</sup> *Quomodo animalia corpora in tam excelsa beatitudine uixisse credibile sit.*

<sup>413</sup> *Mirari non desino cur illud corpus appellat animale, quod magnis laudibus exaltat tantum spirituale atque beatum.*

<sup>414</sup> *Nouimus autem summum sanctae scripturae expositorem, Origenem dico, edisserere non alibi neque alterum paradisum esse praeter ipsum qui in tertio caelo, ut ipse uult, constitutus est, et in quem apostolus Paulus raptus est. Et si in tertio caelo est, profecto spiritualis est.*

<sup>415</sup> *Tertium siquidem caelum in quod raptus est Paulus, spirituale esse summi utriusque linguae auctores non dubitant, sed unanimiter affirmant, illud intellectuale uocantes.*

<sup>416</sup> Ibid. 818C: *Quamquam Epiphanius Constantiae Cypri episcopus in hoc Origenem reprehendat, et omnino Paradisum in terra esse astruat, quendam quidem sensibilem locum in orientalibus mundi partibus, cum sensibilibus lignis fluminibusque caeterisque quae carnaliter ab his qui corporeis sensibus adhaerent simpliciter de paradiso creduntur.* The reference to the corporeal senses, as opposed to the spiritual ones, is typically Origenian, just as the attribution of a "carnal" reading of Scripture to the "simple-minded."



by Eriugena as “most beautiful and true” and followed by almost all interpreters, both Greek and Latin.<sup>417</sup>

As an example of those who follow Origen in the spiritual interpretation of the “skin tunics” and of the whole Paradise account Eriugena chooses Gregory of Nyssa (*sententiam magni Gregorii NYCAEI*), two long excerpts of whom are quoted from *De imagine* (*De hominis opificio*) in *Periph.* 4,819A ff.,<sup>418</sup> which is an indicator of the authoritativeness of Gregory in Eriugena’s view. He also chose to cite Nyssen for the definition of the human being in *Periph.* 4,821C, with a literal translation of Gregory’s *De hominis opificio* PG 44,200D–201A.<sup>419</sup> Indeed, in *Periph.* 4,804CD Eriugena grants to Gregory of Nyssa the primate in Biblical interpretation among the Greeks;<sup>420</sup> the primate among the Romans is granted to Augustine, to be sure, but the superiority of the Greeks in Eriugena’s view is patent throughout his *Periphyseon* and is even declared explicitly in *Periph.* 5,954C: *Graeci solito more res acutius considerantes, expressiusque significantes*. It is remarkable that, even apart from generic or abridged references to Gregory of Nyssa’s *De hominis opificio* in Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*, about a quarter of Gregory’s treatise, known to Eriugena as *De imagine*, has been absorbed in his *Periphyseon*.<sup>421</sup>

For Origen, deification will finally be achieved by all human beings, and Eriugena in *Periph.* 5,922CD even quotes with approval a passage from the third book of Origen’s Commentary on Romans that supports this theory: *Audiat beatum Origenem in libro III in epistolam ad Romanos: “Ego dixi: Dii estis et filii excelsi,” et addidit “omnes.” Quae adiectio omne simul sub hoc*

<sup>417</sup> *Idem namque Epiphanius tunicas pellicias, quas Deus primis hominibus post praeuaricationem consuerat, historialiter de pellibus ouium, quae, ut ait ille, in paradiso fuerant, factas esse non dubitat, et Origenem reprehendit, qui sub illarum pellium figura mortalia corpora, quae primis hominibus merito peccati superaddita sunt, pulcherrime atque uerissime significata fuisse exponit. Quem, Origenem dico, in theoria tunicarum pelliciarum omnes fere auctores Graecorum Latinorumque sequuntur.*

<sup>418</sup> The spiritual nature of the body of Adam and Eve in the Paradise and of all humans after their resurrection according to Gregory is studied by J.W. Smith, “The Body of Paradise and the Body of the Resurrection: Gender and the Angelic Life in Gregory of Nyssa’s *De hominis opificio*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006) 207–228, who highlights how Gregory in *De hominis opificio* distinguishes human nature in its state of decadence after the fall from human nature as originally planned by God, which was not gendered (this is an aspect that God introduced foreseeing the fall). The angelic life planned by God for humanity will be reached in the end, after the resurrection, in spiritual bodies.

<sup>419</sup> *Homo, magna res et nomen, diuinae naturae imago.*

<sup>420</sup> *Scientes post sanctos apostolos nullum apud Graecos fuisse in expositionibus diuinae scripturae maioris auctoritatis Gregorio theologo, nullum apud Romanos Aurelio Augustino.*

<sup>421</sup> É. Jeuneau, *Études érigéniennes* (Paris, 1987), 345–346.

*titulo humanum connexuit genus [...] sub mysterio de futuris praedictum [...] "ecce enim deleo sicut nubem iniquitates tuas," ut uideatur delens eum secundum hoc quod homo est, post haec facere eum deum, tunc cum erit Deus omnia in omnibus.* It is significant that immediately afterwards (922D–923B) Eriugena adds an extensive quotation from the *De hominis opificio* by Gregory of Nyssa, which he calls the *De imagine* by "Gregory the Theologian," on the unity of human nature. This concept of the unity of human nature is accounted for later, in 942AD, on the basis of humanity's being the image of God, and therefore on the basis of the unity of the divine nature; this parallel between the human and the divine nature is again typical of Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>422</sup> And this very same parallel returns in the discussion of the eschatological return to unity in 953A: *in simplicem quandam unitatem adunabimur. [...] Oportebat siquidem imaginem unius ac summae Trinitatis, quae in se ipsa inseparabilis et simplex et incomposita est, in unitatem et inseparabilem simplicitatem redigi.* Asserting the unity of humanity is crucial in that, if humanity is a unity, Christ by assuming it has assumed and sanctified the whole of it, and not only a part. This is why in *Periph.* 5,984A Eriugena can say: *omnes homines unius eiusdemque naturae, quae in Christo redempta est omnique seruitute liberata.*

In any case, the order of which Eriugena thinks in the access to salvation, whether spatial or temporal or maybe both, is based on each one's conduct in this life.<sup>423</sup> This, however, does not mean that the risen bodies will have

<sup>422</sup> See my "Gregory Nyssen's Position in Late-Antique Debates on Slavery and Poverty and the Role of Ascetics," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 5 (2012) 87–118.

<sup>423</sup> *In paradiso itaque humanae naturae unusquisque locum suum secundum proportionem conuersationis suae in hac uita possidebit.* In *Periph.* 5,38,1011A–1018D Eriugena refers to the parable of the ten virgins to indicate the whole humanity's eagerness to attain beatitude; the lamps are the capacity of all humans for the knowledge of truth, and Christ always comes to humans to receive them, always calling everyone to himself (Mt 11:28–29); all will enter the heavenly Jerusalem. All the rational nature tends to its end, i.e., Christ, but not all rational individuals participate in Christ in the same measure. This passage, however, has not an immediate eschatological connotation. *Totius rationabilis creaturae, quae specialiter in homine creata est, et cui naturaliter inest affectus beatitudinis et cognitionis summi boni facultas, hoc est excelsissimae Trinitatis, ex qua manat omne bonum, ipse Dominus in Euangelio decem uirginibus assimilauit uniuersitatem. Quae accipientes lampadas suas, hoc est capacitatem aeternae lucis cognoscendae, exierunt obuam sponso et sponsae, Christo uidelicet et Ecclesiae, quae iam in caelo est, partim in sanctis angelis, partim in purgatissimis hominum animabus, in quibus primitiae naturae humanae, quae adhuc in captiuitate est, mortalis uitae fragiliumque membrorum caelestis patriae ciuibus inseruntur. Sed quare obuam? Quia uidelicet redemptor et sponsus rationalis naturae ineffabili clementiae suae condescensione et sollertiam semper ad recipiendos nos spiritaliter uenit, caelestibus uirtutibus et animabus sanctis ei com-eantibus, affectione salutis nostrae commota. Ille siquidem sponso in aure cordis generaliter*

different degrees of splendour depending on the goodness or evilness of their deeds. All risen bodies will be alike in glory, immortality, and spirituality.<sup>424</sup> Indeed, in the eventual apokatastasis, everything must be restored into the spiritual nature (*omnia in spiritalem naturam reuersura sunt*), and the result, that *omnis spiritus laudet dominum*, indicates that there will be nothing forced in this restoration (*Periph.* 5,952A).

That Eriugena probably thought of an eschatological process before the final unity of all is also suggested by his idea that the eventual apokatastasis will be not only beyond all times, but even beyond all *aeternitates* (all aeons, Origen's αἰῶνες). For God even exceeds all eternity: God is "super-essential" and "supereternal," and infinite (a trait inherited especially from Nyssen, but already present in Origen and Philo). And the apokatastasis will be characterised by the return of all to God, when God will be all in all, when all genera and species have returned to their original causes (*causae primordiales*, i.e., Ideas in the mind of God), and these original causes in turn have returned to God. At that very final stage, deification itself would seem to be universal. The process of deification provided by philosophy is called *deificatio* by Eriugena in *Periphyseon* 5,38 and is explained in *Hom. in Joh.* 23,9: *In ipso [...] homo efficitur Deus: ipse est*. This deification is regarded as a return to God, to the original condition of the creation of humanity, that is, God: *Primordialis conditio: ipse Deus* (*Periph.* 5,38). This return to God is made possible, in Eriugena's view, just as in Origen's, by the incarnation of Christ: *Tota itaque humanitas in ipso, qui eam totam assumpsit, in pristinum reuersura est statum, in Verbo Dei uidelicet incarnato* (*Periph.* 5,36,978D). Eriugena expands on this concept commenting on John,<sup>425</sup> where his dependence on Origen is manifest, as well as his *exitus-reditus* scheme: *Exitus ergo eius a Patre humanatio est; et reditus*

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uniuerso generi humano clamat dicens: *Uenite ad me omnes [...] uenit ergo obuam omnibus cum spona sua, Jerusalem uidelicet caelesti, qui recipere omnes devotus est in consortium suae ciuitatis. [...] Decem itaque uirgines, hoc est totae humanae naturae numerositas, naturali appetitu obuam diligenti se et ad eam uenienti exit, non gressibus corporis, sed affectibus mentis. Sed quamuis aequalis motus sit rationalis naturae ad finem suum qui est Christus, aequalisque aeterni luminis, quae per lampades significatur, appetitio, non tamen aequaliter lucem illam, quae illuminat omnem hominem uenientem in hunc mundum, participat*. This differentiation describes the situation in this world.

<sup>424</sup> *Non enim audiendi sunt qui autumant humana corpora post futuram resurrectionem ita in aethereis spatiis fulsura, ut unumquodque tantum claritatis accipiat, quantum in hac uita conuersationis merito gessit, siue bene siue male [...] contra quod uera ratio ait, diuinis adiuta scripturis, manifeste docens omnium humanorum corporum communem eandemque gloriam et uirtutem in eadem spiritualitate, immortalitate, aeternitate futuram.*

<sup>425</sup> É. Jeauneau, *Jean Scot, Commentaire sur l'Évangile de Jean* (Paris, 1972). I quote from 224–225.

*eius ad Patrem hominis, quem accepit, deificatio et in altitudinem divinitatis assumptio. Solus ille descendit [...] omnes, quos salvavit, in ipso ascendunt, nunc per fidem in spe, in fine uero per speciem in re.* Here, deification would seem to apply to all humans, who ascend to God in Christ.

In *Periph.* 5,32 Eriugena insists that rational creatures, without exclusion, will be transferred to God. He speaks of five *theoriae*, which closely remind me of Evagrius's analogous list of successive θεωρίαι, the penultimate and last of which are, respectively, the contemplation of the Judgment and that of God's mercy. Eriugena's *theoriae* review the whole range of the history of salvation: the first is the original condition of the human being, wanted by God; the second is the historical existence of each single human being in this world; the third is the return of all humanity to its angelic state; the fourth is, not only the restoration, but also the deification, of human beings, and the fifth—which comes even after deification—is the contemplation of all the goods that God's generosity will bestow on all.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> *Hinc occurrit quintuplex rationalis creaturae theoria. Prima enim speculatio ipsius est in generali illa et communi substantialique uirtute, qua omnes homines simul et semel in prima eius conditione eam participant, sive boni sive mali. Secunda in processionibus ipsius in hanc uitam mortalem per singulorum hominum ex corporibus generationem. Tertia in reditu ipsius generaliter per seipsam in angelicum statum, quem deseruit in hunc mundum sensibilem cadens. Quarta in his, qui eam participant, et in hac mortali carne uiuentes, seipsos communemque suam naturam, ac super omnia Creatorem omnium quaerentes, merito suae propriae ac bonae uoluntatis, gratia duce, ad communem suae naturae integritatem redire adepti sunt, ac deinde dono diuinae gratiae super omnia, post se relinquentes omnia, in ipsum Deum transferentur. Quinta speculatio est eorum quae uniuersaliter insita naturae bona quae omnibus, nemine excepto, diuina largitate praestantur et praestabuntur, possidebunt.*



BY WAY OF CONCLUSION:  
THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE CHRISTIAN  
APOKATASTASIS THEORY FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT  
TO ERIUGENA, AND ITS THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The doctrine of apokatastasis, as is found, from the New Testament to Eriugena, in many Christian texts and Patristic authors, is a Christian doctrine and is grounded in Christ. This Christocentric characterisation is especially evident in Bardaisan, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, and Eriugena. Indeed, the Christian doctrine of apokatastasis is based on the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, and on God's being the supreme Good. It is also founded upon God's grace, which will "bestow mercy upon all," and the divine will—which these Patristic authors saw as revealed by Scripture—"that all humans be saved and reach the knowledge of Truth." They also considered it to be revealed in Scripture, and in particular in a prophecy by St. Paul, that in the *telos*, when all the powers of evil and death will be annihilated and all enemies will submit (for Origen and his followers, in a voluntary submission), "God will be all in all." The apokatastasis doctrine is historically very far from having been produced by an isolated character, excessively influenced or even "contaminated" by Greek theories, such as Origen has been long considered to be. The apokatastasis doctrine is embedded in a much broader tradition, which is rooted in the New Testament itself and, even back, in some Jewish universalistic expectations, as I have argued.

There are, of course, some presuppositions in Greek philosophy, but these were far from being simply taken over by Christian supporters of apokatastasis. Origen himself makes it crystal clear, as I have pointed out, that the Stoic concept of apokatastasis was very different from his own, Christian doctrine of apokatastasis, especially because of its necessitarianism—evident from the eternal repetition of the same people and things in each aeon—and of its idea of an infinite succession of aeons, without an end. Both of these elements are indeed opposite to Origen's own notion of apokatastasis. From Origen's point of view, the aeons will come to an end with the apokatastasis itself, and are the theatre of rational creatures' free choices and their consequences. This is an important point, since in the course of its bimillennarian history the Christian doctrine of apokatastasis will be supported in some cases—especially by not learned supporters, such as

William Hilderniss,<sup>1</sup> George of Sicily,<sup>2</sup> or Thomas Moor<sup>3</sup>—along with a denial of free will, which creates serious theoretical problems within the framework of Christianity itself.

The other “pagan” philosophical root of this doctrine, indicated by its opponents in the course of the so-called Origenistic controversy, and still nowadays, is Plato. As I have demonstrated, however, Plato did *not* believe in universal salvation, and Origen felt the need to correct precisely his statement that some persons are too deeply plunged into evil to be curable, and as a result they are ἀνίατοι. Origen precisely contradicted Plato on this point, stating that no being is ἀνίατον for Christ-Logos who created it. Universal apokatastasis was admitted by some Neoplatonists such as Macrobius—who was so convinced of the excellence of this doctrine as to ascribe it to Plato himself—, but only for the soul, with the denial of bodily resurrection and the acceptance of metempsychosis and necessitarianism (*necesse est omnem animam ad originis suae sedem reuerti: Comm. in Somn.*

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<sup>1</sup> In his view, all creatures will be saved thanks to Christ's redemptive suffering. Hilderniss, however, was convinced that one's free will and one's merits or demerits count nothing, that hell does not exist, and that all have already been resurrected in Christ's own resurrection. See G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, vol. 1 (Manchester–New York, 1967), 396.

<sup>2</sup> Ca. 1517–1551. A Benedictine monk who wrote in Sicilian dialect, he was killed in prison after a religious trial. His *Epistla* (Bologna, 1550) proclaims universal apokatastasis, based on the work of Christ and the grace of God. His example contrasts with the appreciation of Origen on the part of Pico della Mirandola and Erasmus. See H. Crouzel, *Une controverse sur Origène à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1977); M. Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus* (Basel, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Unlike Jane Leade and the Cambridge Platonists (on which see my Appendix in *Gregorio di Nissa and Universal Salvation*, forthcoming), Barber Moor in works such as *Clavis Aurea* (London, 1695) supported apokatastasis without basing himself on the Patristic or philosophical tradition. He grounded it in the Bible, esp. Rom 11:11–33, in which the eventual reintegration and salvation of all the gentiles and Israel is announced. See W.E. Burns, “London's Barber-Elijah,” *Harvard Theological Review* 95,3 (2002) 277–290. Origen in *Comm. in Rom.* 4,2–3 interpreted Rom 11:11–33 as an announcement of the final apokatastasis. However, Moor's denial of human free will is very far from Origen, Gregory Nyssen, Evagrius, and the other Patristic supporters of apokatastasis, whom he probably did not know. Another point of divergence is that Moor denied the very existence of otherworldly punishments; he interpreted the references to them in the NT as references to suffering in this world. Moor is one of the very few supporters of apokatastasis who denied every punishment-purification in the other world. He was not concerned about the moral effects of this denial: in his view, the love of God encourages good deeds more than fear of punishments. Origen also thought so, but only of those who are spiritually advanced; the immature need fear. This is why Origen, as I have pointed out, did not preach the apokatastasis doctrine to all. A denial or a radical limitation of free will was also maintained by universalist Christians in the XIX century, such as Unitarians and Universalists. Sins, from their point of view, are due more to historical, social and biological circumstances than to one's free will.

*Scip.* 2,17,14).<sup>4</sup> These three elements were clearly rejected by Origen and by all Patristic supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis.

Origen and his admirers considered the doctrine of apokatastasis to be grounded, much more than in Greek philosophy, in the Bible and especially in the New Testament. Here, besides Peter's speech in Acts concerning the eventual ἀποκατάστασις πάντων, many passages, especially from Paul, could be seen as pointing to it, first of all 1 Cor 15:28, the favourite Biblical quotation of Origen and Gregory Nyssen in favour of apokatastasis; it was used also by Eriugena and by other Patristic authors to support this theory. Along with the New Testament, other writings containing or suggesting this doctrine, such as the *Apocalypse of Peter*, were long regarded as inspired, for example by Clement, who, as I have argued, probably conceived of an eventual universal apokatastasis. I have also demonstrated that, somewhat earlier than Origen, Bardaisan was a supporter of this doctrine, and that, after him, this theory was developed and defended, for instance, by Pamphilus, Methodius, Eusebius, Macrina the Younger, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, Evagrius, Diodore and Theodore, Ps. Dionysius, Isaac of Nineveh and several other Syriac authors, Maximus the Confessor, and John the Scot Eriugena. It will continue even after Eriugena, indeed uninterruptedly up to now, but the Patristic motifs, which are rather homogeneous and compact, will return more sporadically, intermingled with other arguments and considerations.<sup>5</sup>

The doctrine of apokatastasis as the eventual universal salvation is an authentically Christian, or Jewish-Christian, doctrine. Before Christianity, no religion or philosophy had ever maintained it, not even Plato or mystery religions. Outside Christianity, in the Patristic age, only some Neoplatonists, such as Macrobius and Proclus, seem to have maintained it, but only when "pagan" Neoplatonism was a sort of parallel to Christianity, and in any case in a different way from the Patristic doctrine of apokatastasis (e.g. excluding the resurrection, as I mentioned). Further research, which will be carried out in due course, will assess the possible relationship between "pagan" Neoplatonic apokatastasis and Christian apokatastasis.

It is remarkable that the main theoretical questions surrounding the history of apokatastasis in Patristic theology will appear again and again

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<sup>4</sup> See my "Martianus, Macrobius." For the Neoplatonic-Christian debate on universalism in the III–IV cent. see also M.B. Simmons, "Via universalis salutis animae liberandae," in *Studia Patristica* 40 (2006) 245–251. On "pagan" philosophical notions of apokatastasis in Antiquity and Late Antiquity a specific monograph will be devoted.

<sup>5</sup> On the doctrine of universal restoration in the Middle Ages and in modern and contemporary times see my *Universal Salvation*.



in the course of Christian history, right up to the contemporary debate. Let me illustrate this by means of a brief example. Like Origen, John Hick sets the question of apokatastasis in the wider framework of theodicy. He too thinks that for a human being it is better to have free will and grow up in moral and spiritual maturity than to be created perfect and unable to sin. Hick's answer to the problem of theodicy is the same as Origen's: in the end there will be no more evil, and this is not incompatible with human freedom. Indeed, the eventual return of all to God will not cancel human freedom of will, because human orientation toward God is part and parcel of human creatural nature. Like Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, who thought that the image of God, existing in every human being, cannot be cancelled by sin, so does also Hick think of a human natural tendency toward God that can be obscured by sin, but not cancelled. As virtually all Patristic supporters of the doctrine of apokatastasis, Hick believes that many will need long purifications and improvements after death, which will come to an end.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Talbott<sup>7</sup> argued that the exclusion of universal apokatastasis contradicts some tenets of Christian theism, such as the goodness and universal love of God.<sup>8</sup> He builds upon Lewis' statement that the gates of hell are locked from the inside;<sup>9</sup> it depends on those inside to remain separate from God.<sup>10</sup> Talbott remarks that such a choice of separation from God cannot be regarded as a free rational choice. This is what Origen and Gregory of Nyssa in their ethical intellectualism also thought, in line with Plato: the choice for evil cannot be free. Talbott adduces passages from the Old and the New Testament, among those which I have analysed in Chapter 1, and which were used by the Patristic authors I have studied in support of the theory of apokatastasis. The passages highlighted by Talbott especially insist on God's salvific will and Christ's redemptive power,<sup>11</sup> which is absolutely

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<sup>6</sup> J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (London, 1976), *praes.* 242–261; Idem, *Evil and the God of Love* (Basingstoke, 1985<sup>2</sup>), *praes.* 341–345; L. Hall, *Swinburne's Hell and Hick's Universalism* (Aldershot, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> T. Talbott, *The Inescapable Love of God* (Universal Publishers, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> T. Talbott, "The Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment," *Faith and Philosophy* 7 (1990) 19–42.

<sup>9</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (The Centenary Press, 1940), 115. Lewis was an Oxford teacher who specialised in the Middle Ages. After a period of atheism, he was a fervent Christian apologist, acquainted with the work of universalist George MacDonald. In *The Great Divorce*, for instance, it is suggested that after death all can freely choose between hell and Paradise. The latter is never closed.

<sup>10</sup> T. Talbott, "Towards a Better Understanding of Universalism," in *Universal Salvation? The Current Debate*, eds. R. Parry–C. Partridge (Carlisle, 2003), 3–14.

<sup>11</sup> See I. Ramelli, "The Universal and Eternal Validity," 210–221.

universal—as Origen also maintained. Talbott observes that the scriptural passages in which the doctrine of eternal damnation is grounded are highly controversial in their translation and interpretation. I add that the theory of eternal damnation is based especially on the understanding of αἰώνιος as “eternal” in scriptural references to otherworldly fire, punishment, and death, which is linguistically untenable,<sup>12</sup> as several Patristic authors realised (I have shown this in the present work). Talbott focuses on the argument of Christ’s eventual victory over evil.<sup>13</sup> The eternal damnation of some would prevent the beatitude of the saints, who could be happy only by ignoring hell, but beatitude cannot include ignorance.<sup>14</sup> This reminds me of the intercession of the righteous for the damned in works such as the *Apocalypse of Peter*.<sup>15</sup> Talbott, like Origen, buttresses his argument with 1 Cor 15:25–28. He interprets the destruction of death announced therein in the same spiritual sense as Origen did: it is primarily the death of the soul that will disappear. Also, Talbott<sup>16</sup> argues from the definition of God as love in 1 John 4:8.16. Like Origen in *Princ.* 3, Talbott thinks that the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart expresses God’s providence. In 2 Tess 1:9 and 1 Cor 5:5 Talbott, like Origen, understands the ruin/destruction at stake as a destruction of sin and a purification of the sinner. Talbott, again like Origen, thinks that there is no tension between God’s justice and God’s mercy, and that Paul is a universalist from

<sup>12</sup> Ramelli–Konstan, *Terms for Eternity*, new ed.

<sup>13</sup> T. Talbott, “Christ Victorious,” in *Universal Salvation?*, 15–31. He adduces the cessation of all tears (Rev 21:4) and the destruction of death and hell (Rev 20:14). On this see above, Ch. 1, my treatment of Revelation. He also adduces Rom 5:18 in which Christ is said to bring justification and life to all those who were condemned due to Adam, i.e. all humans. Universal reconciliation in Col 1:20, too, excludes eternal damnation according to Talbott. In Phil 2:10–11 the universal profession of faith is spontaneous, as the verb ὁμολογέω confirms.

<sup>14</sup> This is also Talbott’s reply to Craig’s objection that the righteous will enjoy bliss because they will be unaware of the suffering of the damned (W.L. Craig, “Talbott’s Universalism,” *Religious Studies* 27 [1991] 297–308). According to Talbott, Craig’s assumption that at least one human being may never be reconciled with God in undemonstrated (T. Talbott, “Craig on the Possibility of Eternal Damnation,” *Religious Studies* 28 [1992] 495–510). Philosopher Eric Reitan also responds to Craig defending the incompatibility between eternal damnation of some and eternal beatitude of others, also challenging the idea that the damned may freely choose their own damnation, eternally rejecting the salvation offered by God; such a choice—as Origen and Gregory Nyssen maintained, I note—could only derive from ignorance, and therefore would not be free (E. Reitan, “Eternal Damnation and Blessed Ignorance: Is the Damnation of Some Incompatible with the Salvation of Any?,” *Religious Studies* 38 [2002] 429–450; Idem, “Human Freedom and the Impossibility of Eternal Damnation,” in Parry–Partridge, *Universal Salvation?*, 125–142).

<sup>15</sup> See above, Ch. 1, section on the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

<sup>16</sup> T. Talbott, “A Pauline Interpretation of Divine Judgement,” in Parry–Partridge, *Universal Salvation?*, 32–52.

the eschatological viewpoint.<sup>17</sup> Talbott also adduces Matt 19:25 (the argument from the omnipotence of God),<sup>18</sup> the same, I observe, on which Origen based his correction of Plato's affirmation of the existence of some "incurable" souls. Talbott's contention that the salvation of all ultimately depends on God and not on human deserts (Rom 9:16; 11:32) is certainly close to Origen's conviction that retribution will be commensurate with one's sins, but blessedness, after that, will have no measure and no end. Talbott also notices that in the New Testament ἀπόλλυμι does not denote a definitive condition, since it is followed by the idea of being found again or saved. I observe that he uses the same argument as Origen did in his *Homilies on Jeremiah*.<sup>19</sup>

Craig maintains that Talbott has not demonstrated the incompatibility between (1) God's omniscience, omnipotence, and universal benevolence and (2) the damnation of those who do not receive Christ.<sup>20</sup> I observe that, according to Origen and his followers, all will receive Christ, if not now, at least in the other world, or even at the end of all aeons—in the case of Satan and the worst sinners—and therefore the principle holds true that there is no salvation outside Christ.<sup>21</sup> Murray, against Talbott, remarks that soteriological universalism does not explain the reason why God has human creatures pass through the earthly life, which would be useless;

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<sup>17</sup> Talbott, "A Pauline Interpretation," 48: "St. Paul was an obvious universalist. His teaching on this matter was so clear and so explicit that in the end we must explain the mystery of why so many seem to have missed it. [...] When every evil is finally destroyed, every wrong finally set right, and every opposing will finally transformed, then and only then will the scales of justice finally balance; then and only then will God truly be all in all."

<sup>18</sup> T. Talbott, "Reply to My Critics," in Parry-Partridge, *Universal Salvation?*, 247–272.

<sup>19</sup> See I. Ramelli, "Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah." Talbott also invokes Rom 5:17; 1 Cor 15:22, Matt 5:40; Luke 23:34 (which he considers to be authentic; see I. Ramelli's argument for this in "Luke 23:34a: A Case Against its Athetesis," *Sileno* 36 [2010] 233–247); Rom 3:3. Talbott concludes that Christ has accomplished an absolute victory over sin and death and that the ultimate truth about universe is not tragic, but glorious. He argues that, if God is a necessary being whose qualities are omnipotence, omniscience, and love, it is impossible that some will reject God forever, notwithstanding God's will. See T. Talbott, "Providence, Freedom, and Human Destiny," *Religious Studies* 26 (1990) 227–245.

<sup>20</sup> W.L. Craig, "Talbott's Universalism Once More," *Religious Studies* 29 (1993) 497–518. See also O. Crisp, "Augustinian Universalism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 53,3 (2003) 127–145.

<sup>21</sup> G. Knight, "Universalism and the Greater Good: A Response to Talbott," *Faith and Philosophy* 14 (1997) 98–99; T. Talbott, "Universalism and the Greater Good: Reply to Gordon Knight," *ibid.* 16 (1999) 102–105. Against Gordon Knight, Talbott maintains that, of the following three statements, the last is incompatible with the first two: 1) God wants all sinners to be reconciled with himself; 2) God can do so; 3) some sinners will never be reconciled with God and will therefore be damned or annihilated.

moreover, universal salvation is incompatible with human free will.<sup>22</sup> I note that Origen had a reply to both of these objections: 1) life in history is a way of improvement, so that the end will be better than the beginning, in that in the end the Good will be chosen voluntarily; 2) universal apokatastasis is not incompatible with free will, of which Origen was one of the strongest assertors, since all will adhere to the Good-God voluntarily in the end.

One fundamental characteristic of Patristic apokatastasis is, as I have mentioned, its Christocentrism. Another is—what at first might sound paradoxical—its orthodoxy. In fact, the main Patristic supporters of this theory, Origen and Nyssen, did support it *in defence of Christian “orthodoxy,”* against those which were regarded as the most dangerous heresies of their times, as I have argued: Origen supported it against “Gnosticism” and Marcionism, and Gregory against “Arianism.” Both of them, moreover, argued against the subordination of the Son, and Gregory did so expressly in connection with the defence of apokatastasis. On the basis of attestations from Basil, Theophilus, Augustine, and others, I have shown that up to the end of the fourth century many Christians adhered to this doctrine. It is meaningful that all of the Patristic supporters of apokatastasis were faithful to the Christian church; among them are many saints, such as Pamphilus the martyr, Gregory Nyssen, Gregory Nazianzen, Evagrius (who is a saint for the Orthodox Christians), Isaac of Nineveh, John of Dalyatha, Maximus the Confessor, and many others, including Jerome and Augustine at least for a certain time.

Origen, Methodius, and Gregory Nyssen, followed by others, deemed physical death a providential gift, in that it puts a limit to sin and reveals the finitude of evil, thus eliminating an eternity of evil and an eternity of condemnation. Evil, which is a lack of Good, will vanish, “returning to its original nature,” that is, non-being. For no one will choose it any more,

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<sup>22</sup> M. Murray, “Three Versions of Universalism,” *Faith and Philosophy* 16 (1999) 55–68. Talbott and Reitan have replied: T. Talbott, “Universalism and the Supposed Oddity of Our Earthly Life: Reply to Michael Murray,” *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001) 102–119; Idem, “Misery and Freedom: A Reply to Walls,” *Religious Studies* 40,2 (2004) 217–224; E. Reitan, “Universalism and Autonomy: Towards a Comparative Defense of Universalism,” *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001) 222–240. Talbott argues that it is rather the “theodicy of hell” that necessarily entails an unacceptable interference of God with human freedom. According to Reitan the moral autonomy of creatures is guaranteed in the universalistic perspective as well as in that of eternal damnation. Since the former assures the good of the creatures better than the latter, the former is better than the latter. Talbott also observed that the notion that someone can freely chose a destiny of eternal damnation would imply a freedom of sinning and resisting God: T. Talbott, “Freedom, Damnation, and the Power to Sin with Impunity,” *Religious Studies* 37 (2001) 417–434.

and the rational creatures' free will shall adhere to the Good, i.e. God, voluntarily. The final unity, in Origen's view, will indeed be a unity of will more than of substances, a unity of love and participation in God, who represents all possible goods. This is the sense in which God will be "all in all." Given the *Christocentric* and *theocentric* concept of apokatastasis in these Patristic thinkers, it is not surprising that, as I have pointed out, Origen, Gregory Nyssen, Gregory Nazianzen, Rufinus, and even Augustine at first, employed a specifically *theological* argument—with the equation in mind that God is the Good—in support of the apokatastasis theory and against the perspective of an eternal damnation of human beings or rational creatures: namely, that such a perspective is *unworthy of God*.

God being the absolute Good, when God is "all in all" evil has vanished altogether, according to its ontological non-subsistence. I have shown that especially for Gregory of Nyssa the eventual apokatastasis will be, not only the *oikeiōsis* of all creatures to God, who is their *prōton oikeion*, but also and especially the Godhead's own glorious and definitive act of *oikeiōsis* or re-appropriation of what belongs to it, that is, all of its creatures, which were alienated by evil. When they all, after purification and instruction, finally reject evil, then evil—which is no being, but the result of a wrong choice—will utterly disappear. This is a point on which Origen, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa, Evagrius, Ps. Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor and other Fathers insist. In his *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* Gregory depicts with special effect the final triumphal march of the Good (that is, God), which conquers all evil, from the slightest to the worst, ending up with the conquest of the devil himself. Destruction of evil coincides with the transformation of all sinners and their return to the Good/God. This even hints at the mystery that will be announced to another, later supporter of the apokatastasis doctrine, the Benedictine female mystic St. Julian of Norwich<sup>23</sup> (1342–1416/7): the transformation of evil into Good, something that only God can do. In her thirteenth revelation, Christ declares:

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<sup>23</sup> Julian, who protested her loyalty and submission to the Church, studied theology and literature in Norwich at the Benedictine community that was flourishing nearby. In 1373, during a severe illness, she experienced many visions or "showings," which she classified into imaginative and intellectual and described in her *Revelations of Divine Love in Sixteen Shewings*. These are preserved in two redactions, one shorter, which is earlier, and one longer, stemming from 1393. On her intellectual figure and work I limit myself to referring to *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. L.H. McAvoy (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2008), and R. Sweetman, "Sin Has its Place, but All Shall Be Well. The Universalism of Hope in Julian of Norwich," in *All Shall Be Well. Explorations in Universal Salvation and Christian Theology from Origen to Moltmann*, ed. G. MacDonald [R. Parry] (Cambridge, 2011), 66–92.

By the same Might, Wisdom, and Goodness that I have done all this, by the same Might, Wisdom, and Goodness *I shall make well all that is not well* [...] It behoved that there should be sin; but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and *all manner of thing shall be well*. [...] *I can make all thing well, I will make all thing well, and I shall make all thing well*; and thou shalt see thyself that all manner of thing shall be well.

Christ-God will transform evil into Good. Indeed, for Julian, just as for Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, apokatastasis depends on Christ. In the end, when God is "all in all" (1Cor 15:28), there will be "the oneing of *all mankind* that shall be saved unto the blessed Trinity."<sup>24</sup> For humanity, the body of Christ, will then be united to God entirely, as Origen and Gregory Nyssen in his *In Illud* indicated. Not only is evil ontologically non-subsistent and will have to disappear, as Julian herself notes ("I saw not sin: for I believe it hath *no manner of substance nor no part of being*, nor could it be known but by the pain it is cause of"<sup>25</sup>), but evil will be radically transformed into Good, as Christ declares: "Since I have *made well the most harm*, then it is my will that thou know thereby that *I shall make well all that is less*." Jesus is alluding, I think, to his own crucifixion. Here he has already shown how he transforms the worst evil into Good: for that was the greatest evil possible, the culmination of iniquity in the condemnation of an absolutely innocent human being to death, and a horrifying death; the culmination of corruption, falsity, calumination, and violence; envy, betrayal, and meanness also had an important part in that unjust execution, as the Gospels make clear. But Christ-God has transformed the worst of sins into the greatest good possible, the sacrifice on which the salvation of all humanity depends. From this mighty clue Julian and all Christians should deduce that in the end as well, God will transform all evil, even the worst, into Good.<sup>26</sup> As Julian proclaims, this will be God's "great work":

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<sup>24</sup> In her fifteenth revelation Julian explains this notion: "The Charity of God maketh in us such a *unity* that, when it is truly seen, *no man can part himself from other*." Jesus himself states that "suddenly thou shalt be taken from all thy pain, from all thy sickness, from all thy distress and from all thy woe. And thou shalt come up above and thou shalt have me to thy meed, and thou shalt be fulfilled of love and of bliss. And thou shalt never have no manner of pain, no manner of misliking, no wanting of will; but ever joy and bliss without end" (ibid.).

<sup>25</sup> Compare Eriugena's (and already Origen's) notion that God cannot know evil; see above in Ch. 4, section on Eriugena.

<sup>26</sup> Although he is not a mystic, contemporary theologian Jürgen Moltmann also seems to envisage a final transformation of evil into good. Like that of the Patristic authors I have studied, his universalism is based on Christ's redemptive power. Since Christ the Judge is Christ crucified, divine justice cannot be avenging, but *creative*. God will *create justice*,

This is that *Great Deed ordained of our Lord God* from without beginning,<sup>27</sup> treasured and hid in His blessed breast, only known to Himself: by which *He shall make all things well* [...] For like as the blissful Trinity made all things of nought, right so the same blessed Trinity *shall make well all that is not well*.

This will be a miracle like that of creation from nothing;<sup>28</sup> for turning evil into Good is possible only to God: "That which is impossible to thee is *not impossible to me*," says Jesus to St. Julian; "I shall save my word in all things and *I shall make all things well*." This echoes Matth 19:26 with its parallels Mark 10:27 and Luke 18:27 ("impossible to humans, but nothing is impossible to God") and makes it clear that, as Origen already admitted when he corrected Plato—as I have demonstrated—by affirming that "nothing is impossible for the Omnipotent, no being is incurable for the One who created it," the eventual apokatastasis will in fact be a miracle of God.

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making "all things new," making just what is unjust. The Judgment will be the universal revelation of Christ and the perfect accomplishment of his redemptive work. In the depth of Christ's death we find the certainty of the limitlessness of reconciliation and the true basis of universal apokatastasis, of universal salvation, and the new creation of the world for its becoming the eternal Kingdom. See J. Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (London, 1996), 235–255; Idem, *Theology of Hope* (London, 1967); Idem, *Hope and Planning* (London, 1971); Idem, "The Logic of Hell," in *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. R. Bauckham (Edinburgh, 1999), 43–47. Cf. J.-B. Metz–J. Moltmann, *Faith and the Future* (Maryknoll, N.Y. 1995).

<sup>27</sup> The reference is to the μεγάλη βουλή of God, of which Christ is the announcer (ἄγγελος): cf. Isa 9:5–6. As I have already shown in the initial part devoted to Scripture (above, Ch. 1), Eusebius, inspired by Origen, interpreted this prophetic passage in the same way.

<sup>28</sup> In the first revelation, all creatures are declared to subsist only thanks to God's love: "It lasteth, and ever shall [last] for that God loveth it. And so All-thing hath the Being by the love of God." And in the sixteenth revelation Julian proclaims "the endlessness and the unchangeability of His love." The infinity of God's love and God's goodness (i.e., God's being the absolute Good) vis-à-vis the finitude of evil and sin was already a core argument of Gregory of Nyssa's apokatastasis doctrine.

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